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ABSTRACT

As late as 1938 there were 200,000 one-room schools scattered throughout the United States. By 1978 there were little more than 1,000 in operation. Primary-source research on rural education has now been conducted by 23 researchers in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming, sponsored by the Mountain Plains Library Association and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Using information from oral histories, treasured mementoes, speeches, newspapers and other published sources, school records, songs, and photographs, this volume presents historical vignettes of many aspects of rural education from the late 1800's to 1980. Chapters focus on: country school architecture; elements of country school success (sample diploma, examination questions, games, class pictures); teachers (their role, rules, restrictions, salaries, training, certificates); the major role played by rural schools in imparting American culture to immigrants; the multi-purpose role of country schools as community centers used for voting, dancing, card-playing, socializing, debating, church, weddings, funerals, and civic meetings; and present day contributions, implications, and trends for the country school. The addresses of Country School Legacy Archive Repositories where additional materials may be sent are listed. (NEC)

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HUMANITIES ON THE FRONTIER

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY: HUMANITIES ON THE FRONTIER

The Mountain Plains Library Association is pleased to be involved in this project documenting the country school experience. Funding of this project from the National Endowment for the Humanities, cost sharing and other contributions enabled us all to work with the several state-based Humanities Committees as well as many other state and local libraries, agencies and interested citizens. We are deeply impressed not only by the enthusiasm for this work by all concerned but by the wealth of experience brought to bear in focusing attention on—and recapturing—this important part of history, and how we got here. This project seems to identify many of the roots and "character formation" of our social, political and economic institutions in the West.

Already the main Project objective seems to be met, stimulating library usage and increasing circulation of historical and humanities materials in this region. Public interest is rising in regional, state and local history. Oral history programs are increasing with greater public participation. The study of genealogy—and the search for this information—is causing much interest in consulting—and preserving—historical materials. What has been started here will not end with this project. The immediate results will tour the entire region and be available for any who wish the program, film, and exhibit. There will be more discussion of—and action on—the issues involving the humanities and public policies, past and present. The Mountain Plains Library Association is proud to be a partner in this work, the Country School Legacy, and its contribution to understanding humanities on the frontier.

Joseph J. Anderson
Nevada State Librarian
Past President
Mountain Plains Library Association

COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY:
Humanities on the Frontier

Project Director—Andrew Gulliford

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ABSTRACT

"Country School Legacy: Humanities On the Frontier" represents original research by 24 librarian/researchers and humanities scholars on six important themes: Country Schools as Historic Sites; Country Schools as Community Centers; Teachers: Their Roles, Rules, and Restricitions; Reading, Writing, 'Rithmetic and Recitation; Country Schools and the Americanization of Ethnic Groups; and Country Schools Today. Research was sponsored by the Mountain Plains Library Association under the direction of Andrew Gulliford, and $275,000 in funding was awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The research focuses primarily on the states of: Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. In each state all six sub-themes have been throughly researched, and that research is reflected in the 1,500 pages of comprehensive reports written for the project. Of special note are the authentic manuscripts of retired teachers who vividly tell of their rural school experiences.

Publicity about the project has occurred in: History News, the National Retired Teachers Association Newsletter, The Christian Science Monitor, American Heritage, Small School Forum, The Interstate Compact for Education, Utah Preservation/Restoration, Education Week and hundreds of newspapers across the West and Midwest. A film is also available. Contact: Project Director, Country School Legacy, Box 305, Silt, CO, 81652.

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Kansas	Teacher's Professional Interest Certificate Teacher's Temporary Certificate Teacher's County Certificate Reward Card — 1891-92 — H. Bratley — Ford County Reward Card — 1892-93 — H. Bratley — Sedgwick County
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North Dakota	Notice of Apportionment of State Tuition Fund — 1899 Souvenir from Teacher — 1928 — Elsie Berntsen — Ray Souvenir from Teacher — 1923-24 — 1924-25 — Gladys Ganser — Jamestown Souvenir from Teacher — 1924-25 — Alice Conitz — New Salina Souvenir from Teacher — 1927-28 — Bernice Weber — McClusky
South Dakota	First Grade Certificate — 1919 — Dorothy Franzer — Cloquet, Minnesota Souvenir from Teacher — 1912 — Herb Blakely — Madison
Schoolbooks	Four Great Americans — James Baldwin — Werner School Book Company — 1899 — Herb Blakely — Madison, South Dakota Baldwin School Readers and Mental Arithmetic — Two pages from Graded Work in Arithmetic — S.W. Baird — American Book Company — 1897 — Mary Cornish — Sedalia, Colorado A Song for February — The Music Hour — Second Book — Published by the State of Kansas, Topeka, Kansas — 1937 — Karen Hauptman — Denver, Colorado
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Foreword

The original inspiration for this project came from an article titled "Educational Legacy: Rural One-Room Schoolhouses" by Dr. Fred E. H. Schroeder published in *Historic Preservation* in 1977. Thanks to the sponsorship of the Mountain Plains Library Association and funding by the National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Public Programs and the Library Program, major primary-source research on rural education has now been conducted by 23 researchers in eight states.

In archives designated at the back of this booklet, oral histories, school records, photographs, and personal country school accounts are to be found for the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, Wyoming, Nevada, Nebraska, Kansas and Utah.

Joseph Edelen, MPLA Executive Secretary, is to be commended for his role as Fiscal Agent for the $275,000 eighteen month grant. The carefully composed exhibits were designed by **Berkeley Lobanov**, and the superb documentary film is the work of a major new filmmaker, **Randall Teeuwen**.

Hundreds of former students, retired teachers, librarians, and local historical-society officials have spent countless hours volunteering their time on behalf of the project. The Country School Legacy is indeed richer thanks to those individuals, professional and non-professional, working and retired, who agreed to be interviewed, to identify former schools, and to meticulously comb through school records.

The exhibits, the film, this booklet, all serve as precursor to the seminar discussions which will be held at over 264 sites throughout eight states. The seminars will be coordinated by staff members and will feature panel discussions on contemporary and historical themes in rural education. The seminars will provide not only an opportunity for personal sharing and reminiscing, but also a serious evaluation of the role of the country school in the community.

As T. S. Eliot said, "We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and to know the place for the first time."

The Country School Legacy staff is to be praised for their dedication, perseverance, and enthusiasm. I have truly enjoyed working with each and every one of the humanists and researchers. Thanks go to Colorado Mountain College and Silt Elementary School for providing me with a leave of absence to direct this grant. I am also indebted to my wife, Stephanie Moran, who endured interminable telephone calls and weeks on end when I was away from home on the trail of one-room schools.

Looking to the past, I would like to dedicate this booklet to **Mrs. Esma Lewis** who taught school in Garfield County, Colorado for sixty years. Three generations of students are in her debt.

Looking to the future, I dedicate this booklet to **Dan Vogeler** and his students at the Brown's Park one-room school in northwest Colorado. May all the country schools in this nation continue to offer an excellent education within a warm framework of close personal and community ties.

> In the words of Dr. Fred Schroeder:
> But the farther I travel from that quaint and fragrant beginning, the closer is my affinity to the goals of the resourceful and idealistic rural teacher for whom no subject, course or age was separated from its neighbors, and with whom the school day became an invitation to circles of experience, widening outward from the common room so that child, community, nature, books and imagination were unified in an adventure of growing and learning.

Andrew Gulliford
Silt, Colorado
June, 1981

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Randall Teeuwen, Esther Cambell (81), and Andrew Gulliford at the Ladore School, National Historic Site, Browns Park, CO.

Special thanks go to Arnold Dollase, Western Colorado Rural Communities Program funded by the Kellogg Foundation. WCRCP was instrumental in assisting with the original grant application and in helping to pay grant administrative costs.

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Cover Photo: A South Dakota School in 1902
Courtesy of the South Dakota State Historical Society

Back Photo by Andrew Gulliford

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COUNTRY SCHOOL ARCHITECTURE

After one look at the building, I was sure I had lost my mind. It was built of rough boards with double-boarded walls with tarpaper between the boards. We had a small box heater to heat the building which it didn't do in cold weather. When it was really cold we moved the desks up as close as we could to the stove.

Olive Salladay, Teacher,
South Park, Colorado, 1927

At the turn of the century, the United States had 200,000 one-room schools, but now there are little more than a thousand in operation. What happened to all of those simple, white, frame buildings that dotted the prairie or were tucked away in narrow mountain valleys?

They had names like Brush Creek School, Fairview, Broken Bone, Windy Point, Pagoda, Dunkley, Sleepy Cat, Elk Head, Moon Hill, and Fly Gulch. One school in Hamilton County, Nebraska near Cedar Hill earned the nickname "Pokey Hoodle."

From 1870 until 1940, the one-room school played a vital part in the settling of the American West. Rural America was raised in a country school, and those values and traditions which made up our combined heritage were taught by teachers in isolated communities on vast sweeps of the mountains and plains. The buildings remain as silent testaments to a nation of immigrants bent on success.

No one knows how many one-room school buildings still stand. State historical societies are ignorant about an architectural feature in their state's history that is absolutely pivotal to the development of rural western states. Consequently those schools that are not burned or demolished are being destroyed by simple neglect and natural deterioration.

Architecturally the schools are as diverse as those who built them. All of them are made from whatever materials were at hand — wood, stone, logs, adobe, brick, and sod. The first Nebraska schools were little more than sod huts with dirt floors, crude doors, and leaky roofs. In one Kansas sod school, a snake once fell through the roof, landed on the pot-bellied stove, and began to sizzle!

In 1886 a sod schoolhouse in Custer County, Nebraska was all the community could afford; by 1902 the citizens of Cando, North Dakota had built a high school overwhelmingly beautiful in its design and massive in its proportions. The immigrants were here to stay.

The line blurs and the definitions blend as to what constitutes a country school, but the rationale is the same in every state. A community with a school, was a community with a future. Unlike the East where the settlers built churches first, in the West all manner of men were to be found who spoke a variety of languages and held quite different religious beliefs. Schools therefore took priority. In the years from 1875, schoolhouses were erected in Nebraska at the rate of approximately one each day—and for the next quarter century, a new schoolhouse was erected every two days. In Scotts Bluff county, Nebraska, a school was built in 1886 with walls of baled straw, a sod roof and a dirt floor. It was sixteen feet long, twelve feet wide, and seven feet high. Within two years cattle had devoured it.

Writing in **Sod Walls: The Story of the Nebraska Sod House**, Rober L. Welsch states:

> December first saw the new sod schoolhouse ready for its fifteen-year-old teacher in short skirts and long braids. The little, unpainted, rickety table and equally feeble chair had been salvaged from the unoccupied sod cabin of my grandmother, Mrs. Martha Mapes; the square, wood-burning stove had been lent by Reverend William Elliot, father of W. C. Elliot of Mason City; six wooden benches had been made to accommodate not only the six pupils but the people who would come there to attend church services or community affairs. At the training school we had been taught how to make a crude blackboard by applying a compound—chiefly of soot or lampblack—to a kind of building paper. When six feet of this had been put in place and a box of chalk purchased, the equipment was complete.
>
> The home-made benches varied, as three had backs while three had none and the only boy, Ed Cooper, contended that he should occupy one of the most comfortable ones, so a compromise was necessary. As there were no desks, the writing lesson was a protracted one, each child in turn sitting on the teacher's chair at her table to laboriously write in his copybook.
>
> The floor was dirt and during the cold winter of 1884 the teacher's feet were frosted. Later a quantity of straw was put on the floor which made it warmer but proved to be a breeding place for fleas. This was not conducive to quiet study but did afford the children some bodily activity.

If fleas frequented dirt floors in the winter, when spring thaws came the sod-school floors were often "slick as grease." But there were worse calamities.

In **Let Your Light Shine** the story is retold of how when Hannah Johnson arrived from Nebraska to teach in Daniel, Wyoming she found her school had four walls but no roof. It was spring and the ranchers were taking their cattle to the summer range. They stopped their work to board the roof, but the mail-order roofing paper did not arrive before a heavy rain. When the rain splashed down between the boards, the teacher taught from under her umbrella and the children continued their work sitting under their desks.

In wooded areas along the Missouri, the Platte and other streams, log cabins would usually be built for the students. Mrs. George Haight of Madison County, Nebraska described the log school she attended, which was constructed about 1871:

> Mr. Hutchins hauled logs from the Elkhorn River, he then hewed off both sides, put them on top the other and filled the openings with grass and mud. For the roof he put on poles, trash and grass and lastly dirt. There was one window and a door large enough for a barn.
>
> The first year we had no floor, but the second they sawed slabs and placed them round side down. Benches were made of slabs also with four sticks driven in for legs and unless we sat just so, down all would go which often happened as we youngsters of this rudely constructed hut were in for a good time occasionally...

If green wood was used small branches would continue to sprout from inside the walls.

Nellie Carnahan Robinson taught in the Disappointment Creek Valley in Southwest Colorado in 1897. As a teacher new to the area, she was not impressed with her little log school.

> I am sure there was not another schoolhouse in the whole country as primitive as this one. There couldn't have been. It was made of logs and had been built in a day by the men in the settlement. The dimensions were about fourteen by sixteen feet. The logs were chinked and daubed with adobe mud. In many places the mud had fallen out. If a child wanted to look at anyone passing, he would peek between the logs.
>
> The roof was made by first placing a layer of poles across which was the

ceiling. The poles were then covered with straw and over the straw was a thick coating of adobe mud. From the ridge pole on each side were unfinished boards. There was very little slant to the roof, but it kept out the rain.

On some days we had occasional showers of dirt when a wood rat would be prowling around up there. The floor was of unfinished boards, and if a child dropped a pencil, he had learned to be quick to retrieve or it rolled through the cracks under the floor. At times we would have a general upheaval at the noon hour when the boys would take up the floorboards and reclaim the erasers, pencils, chalk, and various other articles the wood rat had hidden under there.

In Wyoming, more often than not, the school was a log building. Walls covered with muslin or burlap moved frequently when mice came inside to explore the interior.

Even though the schoolhouse itself might be made of rough cut logs, its setting could be one of natural beauty which made up for the crude architecture. According to Mary A. Riley:

> The setting was very picturesque—a little valley with forested hills all around, Devils Tower to the west, rimrocks to the east and the irrigated pastures and hay fields of the Campstool Ranch to the north. Chokecherries, gooseberries, strawberries, and wild roses grew along the banks of Lytle Creek. Our drinking water came from the clear, cool stream.

Country schools represented the ultimate in utilitarian architecture. Frame buildings often cost no more than a few hundred dollars in materials. All labor was donated, and school supplies were scavenged. In at least one Nevada mining camp, schoolchildren had the dubious distinction of sitting on abandoned dynamite kegs instead of desks!

The schools often moved around a great deal, too. As populations changed in farming or mining communities, the school buildings, built without benefit of foundations, plumbing, or wiring, would be put on skids and moved to adjacent communities. Most of the moves met with the mutual approval of local school boards, but occasionally clandestine moves occurred at night. Children would walk to school the next day only to find their school building another mile or two down the road.

Alice Marsh described an incident in "Fifty Years Ago in Currie Nevada" which illustrates a community's attachment to its schoolhouse. Apparently, the schoolhouse was on the property of a widow who was not particularly enchanted with the school:

> The 'poor widow' constantly quarreled with this one and that one, indeed finally wasting her entire property in lawsuits. While warring with the chairman of the school board, she declared she was going to make the schoolhouse into a washhouse. Since it was on her land, it belonged to her, she said. One day, she actually boarded the morning train for Elko to bring back the sheriff on the afternoon train to put us off as trespassers. Now, we know that had the schoolhouse been on a concrete foundation, it might be proved to be attached to the land. It was, however, on piles of rock at the four corners and the middle of the long sides. There was no time to get a legal opinion. As soon as the train had vanished around the bend, several teams of draft horses appeared as if by magic. The schoolhouse, the pupils and the teacher all rolled off and down the road a quarter of a mile to a bit of railroad property. The fence around the old lot was replaced, and every trace of our occupancy was removed. When the sheriff stepped from the train that afternoon, the school was in session as usual, and he could find no sign of its ever having been on the lot in

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Jarre Creek Log School (Douglas County) School District #5, Colo.
1888—Classes moved to mouth of Jarre Canyon by the County Road (67);
1908—Decision to build a new school 1 mile east (on County Road 67). Log school was sold to Mrs. McIntyre for $25.00.

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Photo Courtesy of Kansas State Historical Society

Thomas County Dugout School, Kansas

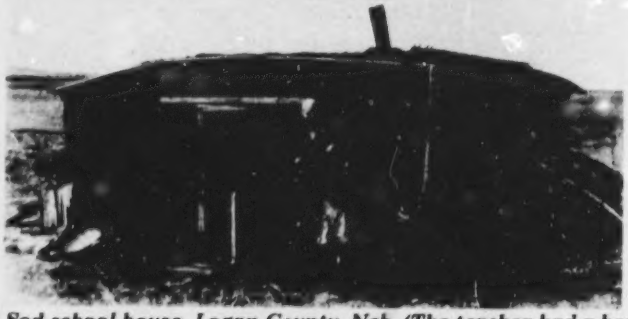

Photo Courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society

Sod school house, Logan County, Neb. (The teacher had a bed and cooking utensils in the building.)

Cold Creek School, c. 1905. Nevada

Photo Courtesy of Nevada Historical Society

First school on Cottonwood Creek, Denio, Nevada

Claim shack used as a school, South Fork of Bad River, S.D. c. 1904

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Photo unidentified

Photo Courtesy of State Historical Society of North Dakota

Cando High School, Cando, N.D. c. 1902

Salina, Colorado

Photo Courtesy of Nevada Historical Society

Manhattan, Nev. c. 1910

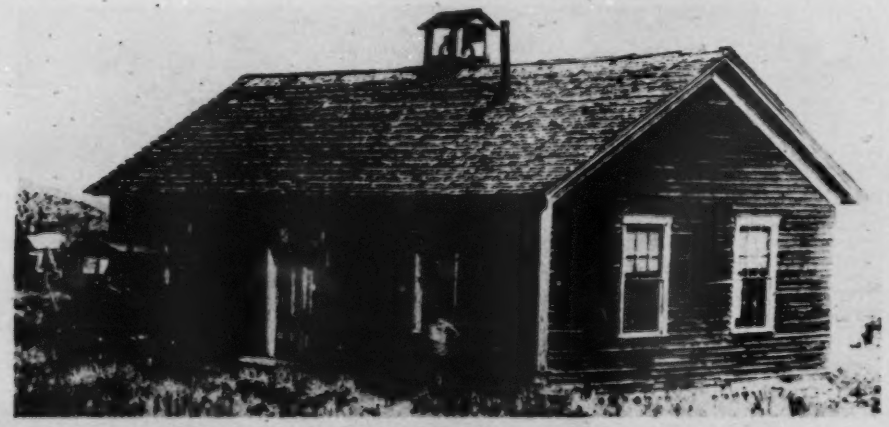

Photo Courtesy of Nevada Historical Society

Hamilton, White Pine County, Nev. (Richard Dean, center, teacher)

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Photo Courtesy of State Historical Society of North Dakota

Cleveland Consolidated School, Nelson County, N.D.

> town. Strange, too, the sheriff couldn't find a single person who had ever seen the school on that spot.

Rural schools had to be located within walking distance or at least pony-riding distance of the homes of the pupils. In the territorial era, South Dakota tended to replicate the Eastern dimensions of two by three miles for a school district. Brookings County, along the Minnesota border, developed an average of five schools per standard congressional township of thirty-six square miles. District sizes ranged from four square miles to twelve square miles.

Further west in South Dakota there tended to be still fewer schools per township, but this state of nearly 80,000 square miles still developed 5,011 one-teacher rural schools by 1916, when the number was at or near the peak.

The upshot of the density of schoolhouses that developed was that the number of families and the amount of wealth to underwrite a school building were not large. Costly buildings often were clearly beyond the means of the tax base, and the legislature saw fit to protect districts against the foolish extravagance of a temporary majority even after the grinding poverty of the first years of settlement had been overcome.

Buildings intended to last indefinitely, however, soon followed. Neighborhoods often built these schoolhouses before most of the settlers were out of their initial dugouts, soddies, or claim shanties. It has been suggested that this phenomenon occurred not just because the settlers were eager for schools for their children, but also because of shrewd fiscal behavior on their part. They voted bonds to run over a long period so that the settlers who would come later would bear the larger part of the expense. There would also be immediate income to some of the early settlers as they hired out to haul lumber from a railhead and to aid in construction.

In Colorado, recognizing that the improved property in most areas of the state was minimal and that additional sources for school financing would not only be desirable, but probably necessary, the second Territorial Legislature, when it convened in mid-summer 1862, provided for the following supplement to school funds: "That hereafter when any new mineral lode, of either gold bearing quartz, silver, or other valuable metal, shall be discovered in this Territory, one claim of one hundred feet in length on such lode shall be set apart and held in perpetuity for the use and benefit of schools in this Territory...." It was anticipated that this innovative approach by the Territory would facilitate the educational enterprise in the area while, at the same time, reducing the tax burden on individual property owners.

W. J. Curtice, the first Territorial Superintendent of Common Schools, responded to his new position with the following charge to the public to carry out the most important phase of the first school laws:

> It now remains for the people and their duly chosen school officers, to immitate (sic.) the commendable zeal of the Legislative Assembly in behalf of education, by carrying into effect the school law and inaugurating a public school system in every county of the Territory. In discharging this duty, we shall not only remove a great barrier—want of schools—to the rapid settlement of the country, but will be developing an educational system among us, for the future, of greater value than the gold of our mountains, and a better safeguard to society than the elective franchise or standing armies.

Country schools were a common sight on the prairie landscape of North Dakota. Although wood construction was most common, early records compiled by the Superintendent of Public Instruction indicate a variety of building materials. In 1894, 273 schools were built in North Dakota. Of that total, 263 were frame, 5 were stone, 1 was sod and 4 were of log construction. By 1906, North Dakota had 3,700 schools. Of that total, 3,554 were frame, 103 were stone or brick, 9 were sod and 34 were of log construction. By 1914-1915, the last year that such statistics were compiled, North Dakota had 5,150 frame, 252 stone or brick and 19 log or stone schools.

While the earliest participants of the country school legacy experienced some variety of construction and architecture, later generations did not. Standardization was established by the second decade of the 20th century. Planbooks for the construction of schools and the passage of state laws aimed at uniformity promulgated by the State Superintendent and administered by the state's fifty-three county superintendents, carried out the process. Yet, if standardization eliminated this local variety of architecture, it also established a common legacy which was experienced by virtually all rural school children over the next thirty years. The common sense of the white, framed, one-room school within walking distance of the family farm was duplicated in every township of the state from 1915 until the end of World War II.

In Wyoming, to obtain standardization certain physical elements of the school had to be met. This included well sites, good outdoor bathrooms, playground equipment, flag pole, and other additions to the structure that made movement of the building a more complicated and expensive procedure than it had been in the past.

Schools were named after geographical points or other landmarks, and names like

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"Eagle's Nest," "Paradise Valley," and "Cottonwood" were duplicated many times throughout the state. There was also a tendency to name the school after the family who donated the land or upon whose land the school was moved. Changes in land ownership would then mean a renaming of the school. Another custom was to name the school after the children attending. This was fairly common on the so-called "ranch" schools. A large family moving into the district could change the name of the school by the sheer number of children from one family that attended it.

Undoubtedly the first white frame country schools followed the universal design of village churches that earlier had housed schools. Such churches typically had long rectangular floor plans with windows on two sides and an entrance at one end, above which was the belfry. Often, school buildings were little more than one room with an entry way, a pot-bellied stove, and a blackboard. Yet the Paragon School at the Pioneer Museum near Gunnison, Colorado boasted a huge bell tower, large classrooms, and even a Queen Anne-style turret with three curved windows!

The architecture of most country schools was strictly vernacular. Any special embellishment usually centered around the bell tower. The bell was essential not only to call children to school, but also if someone was lost or hurt or if a prairie fire was coming perilously close. Many mining camp residents rushed to the mine if the bell pealed ominously in the middle of the day. Women clutched their infants and feared for the depth of the cave-in and the safety of their husbands.

But the school bell also rang at Christmas, and it was a constant source of community pride. Many schools built simple roofs over the bells. Other schools had elaborate bell towers with ornate gingerbread woodwork or horizontal slats to keep the birds out.

All manner of state and local historical societies have collaborated in the preservation of country schools. In Maine, Norlands District #7 School at Livermore has been restored as part of a living history program. Students who visit for the day sit on benches, write on slates, use goose quill pens, and take trips to the functional outhouse.

At Lonsdale, Minnesota a country schoolhouse is being renovated into a cultural arts center by a non-profit corporation dedicated to the restoration of old District 76. Bodega Bay in California boasts a magnificent two-story school now transformed into an art gallery and elegant cafe.

Across the United States schoolhouses are being spruced up and repaired. An excellent book by Goldie Piper Daniels titled **Rural Schools and Schoolhouses of Douglas County, Kansas** does a superb job of documenting schools near Lawrence, Kansas, many of which were stone.

College campuses with one-room schools include Chadron State College at Chadron, Nebraska and Emporia State University at Emporia, Kansas. The Plymouth School at Fort Hays State University in Fort Hays, Kansas was constructed of post rock limestone. Phi Delta Kappa sponsored its resurrection on campus and faithfully helped to move the 3,000 stones.

Schools can be found at the Friends of the Middle Border Museum, in Mitchell, South Dakota; South Park City at Fairplay, Colorado; Pioneer Village at Minden, Nebraska; and at Madison, South Dakota. Schools have been moved to the museum at Lusk, Wyoming; the Thresher's Museum at Rugby, North Dakota; Centennial Village at Greeley, Colorado; city park at Rangely and at Limon, Colorado; and the county fairgrounds at Amidon, North Dakota.

Dozens of country schools are being preserved, renovated, and restored. Interested local history associations are intent on preserving the Country School Legacy because they feel it was an integral chapter in the settling of the frontier.

Photo Courtesy of State Historical Society of North Dakota

Barnes County School (Album #65) N.D.

In the words of Dr. Alan Miller, who spearheaded moving the Plymouth School to the Fort Hays State University campus, "It is altogether appropriate that we dedicate this stone schoolhouse, in the spirit of our pioneering ancestors, to the frontiersmen of tomorrow—our children. May they learn that their future is in understanding their past."

* * *

Material for this section not otherwise credited came from Dr. Ernest Grundy, Kearney, Nebraska; Jim Dertien, Bellevue, Nebraska; Dr. Paul Hack, Lawrence, Kansas; Milton Riske, Cheyenne, Wyoming; Robert Bartheli, Powell, Wyoming; Charles Johnson, Denver, Colorado; Jessie Embry, Provo, Utah; Philip Brown, Brookings, South Dakota; Dan Rylance, Grand Forks, North Dakota; and Andrew Gulliford.

Excerpts were previously published in **Utah Preservation/Restoration**, Spring, 1981, and **And Cattle Ate the School** by the Nebraska State Educational Association for the Nebraska Centennial.

Additional references include: "Educational Legacy: Rural One-Room Schoolhouses" by Fred E. H. Schroeder in **Historic Preservation**, July-September, 1977, and "What You Can Learn From Your Rural School" by Fred E. H. Schroeder in **History News**, April, 1981, published by the American Association For State and Local History.

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Photo Courtesy of South Dakota State Historical Society

A South Dakota School in 1902

Photo Courtesy of State Historical Society of North Dakota

Barnes County School (Album #80) N.D.

Photo Courtesy of State Historical Society of North Dakota

Kulm School, ND

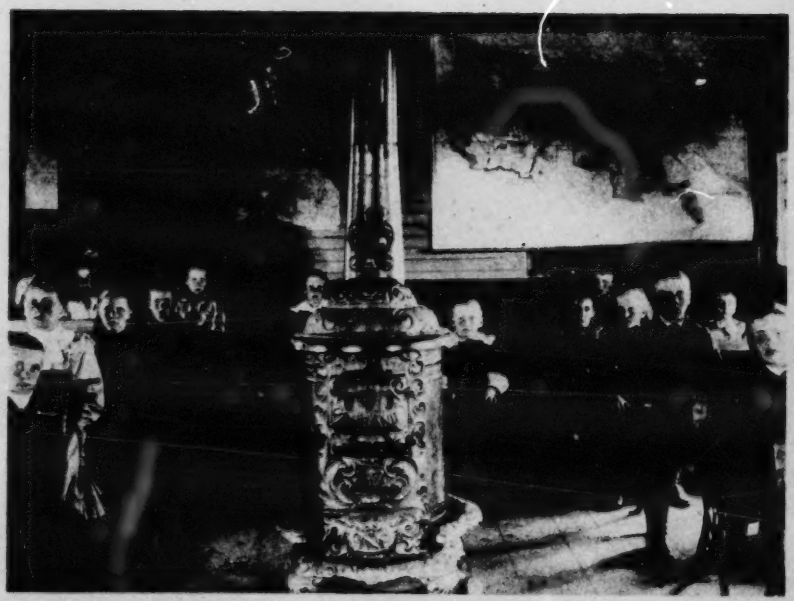


Photo Courtesy of State Historical Society of North Dakota

Sargent, N.D.

CROSS LIGHTING

In a building without electricity and with no budget for kerosene, lighting presented a serious problem. Most schools therefore, had windows on the east and the blackboard on the west. Some schools had windows on both sides, but for years the notion prevailed that if light came from two sources students doing written work would ruin their eyes. A few brave districts tackled the problem by putting windows to the north for a constant, even light, but the building must have been freezing cold in the winter.

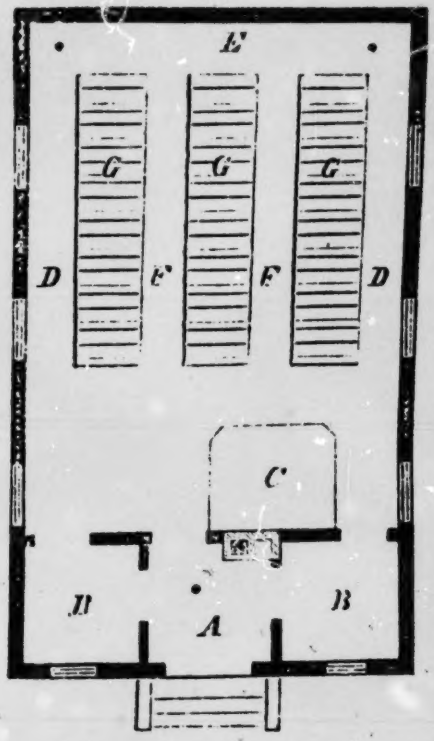
It is ironic that in so many of the schools in beautiful mountain valleys or out on the high plains windows were placed only on one side of the building. The pupils were forced to face the front of the classroom where the morning light illuminated the blackboards while autumn's magnificent colors in the high country changed behind the student's backs.

Says Nora Mohlberg, retired teacher from Milnor, North Dakota, "The country schoolhouse was the most utilitarian building imaginable but in most instances it had one serious drawback. That was the cross lighting that often injured the eyes of the students without being noticed at the time. If the windows were in the north and south walls, the damage was not so great. But windows on the east and west often created reflections that were injurious to the eyes of the students although no one really understood what was happening at that time."

The typical one-room schoolhouse was a frame structure no larger than 24 by 36 feet for the most part, which sat on an acre or so of ground whose sod often produced no trees nor supported a fence. Usually one or two privies slouched in a corner of the schoolyard, but far too often to suit the educators there were none at all. "Too much cannot be said against the barbarous custom of providing no place of retirement whatever," wrote the Nebraska superintendent in 1872. "One privy is scarcely better than none," he said, "and (in) some respects worse. How many ruined characters can trace their downfall to the scenes of their early school days, where, through force of circumstances, they lost that delicate sense of modesty, so essential to guard the virtue of the young."

Nor did the one-room schoolhouse compensate in beauty on the inside for what it lacked on the outside. A potbellied stove occupied the center of the room and patented, store-bought desks stretched in rows in front of the teacher's desk and blackboard which were located at the end of the room opposite the door. In the better schools, wainscoting, rising two feet from the floor, guarded the walls, which by the 1890's were often adorned with pictures and mottoes. But even in these school rooms, the maps, charts, dictionaries, and other apparatus that educators believed necessary for good instruction were often in short supply. And not until the 1890's did uniform textbooks begin to replace the vast assortment of schoolbooks country school children were accustomed to take to school.

Wayne E. Fuller
"Country Schoolteaching on the Sod-House Frontier"
Arizona and the West
Summer 1975



Perspective and ground plan for a country school house.

COUNTRY SCHOOL HOUSES.

We have elsewhere discussed the subject of school houses in general. We have introduced a cut for a country school house, which has been kindly furnished by the American Journal of Education, believing it will be of value to those who contemplate the erection of such a building.

This house should be 28x40 on the ground, height of ceiling at least 15 feet. The school room will then be 28x32; the two wardrobes each 8x9; the entry 8x10. The partitions and walls will, of course, lessen these dimensions to the extent of their thickness. This house will accommodate fifty pupils. For a very small district the building may be 24x32. Teachers' platform 6x10, or 5x8, 8 or 10 inches high. Wainscoting should extend entirely around the rooms and entry. Black boards of liquid slating entirely around the school room in width *not less* than 4½ feet; 5 feet is still better. The uppermost foot and a half is very useful for permanent copies in writing and drawing; and for other uses. The windows should be so constructed that they may be let down from the top. The heating should be by furnace, or by a ventilating stove. John Grossius, 389 Main street, Cincinnati, manufactures a school stove for fifty dollars, which is economical, and efficient; by it, pure air is taken from the outside, heated and introduced into the school room, thus affording complete ventilation. Even country districts can well afford this luxury. Indeed they cannot afford to do without it. We should be glad to see every country district in Colorado build as good a school house as is represented in the cut; and as much better as can be afforded.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

HORACE M. HALE,
Superintendent Public Instruction.

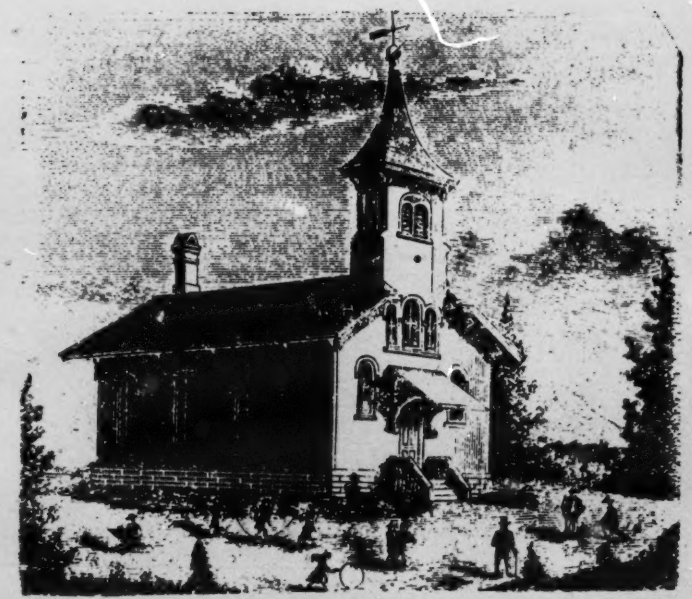


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Photo Courtesy of Kansas State Historical Society

Selden School, Kansas. 1894-1907

...Any special embellishment usually centered around the bell tower. The bell was essential not only to call children to school, but also if someone were lost or hurt or if a prairie fire was coming perilously close.

Photo Courtesy of Dorothy Ritenour

Barclay School, Clover, NEV

Photo Courtesy of Nevada Historical Society.

Lida School House, Esmeralda County, NEV. 1908

Photo Courtesy of Wyoming State Archives, Museums and Historical Dept.

Dutch Flats School, WYO

COUNTRY SCHOOL SUCCESS

The class work is showing more and more those who are earnest about their education, those who have a determined purpose to get all there is to be gotten out of a year's school work, and those who are careless seemingly, or do not desire to benefit themselves with these opportunities so freely offered.

These nice spring days require an effort for boys to tear themselves away from their tops and horse shoes and come to school Yet he who does so conquers in manhood, and yes in womanhood, too, for in the intellectual realm man has found his peer in woman.

From the Rifle Reveille,
Rifle, Colorado, 1896

You can see them in the photographs. They were dusty, dirty little urchins in torn and faded coveralls who attended school barefoot or wore old, worn out work boots. The girls dressed in hand-me-downs, and often you can tell members of the same family because their clothing was cut from identical cloth.

They were poor. Their parents had almost no money; what they had was invested in land and farming equipment. Education was a luxury, but they scrimped and saved because they wanted their children to do better and have more opportunity in the rugged, new mountain and plains states.

By 1900, Nebraska, Kansas, and Iowa had the highest literacy rate in the country. Why did country schools succeed despite poorly heated buildings, few books and school supplies, underpaid teachers, and no electric lights or central plumbing? In the words of Mrs. Margaret Darien of Basalt, Colorado, who taught at the one-room school in Emma, "The younger ones listened to the older ones recite. They were real interested in their social studies and history and we used to have physiology in those days. They picked up a lot of things."

Children in a country school learned independently, and they progressed at their own pace. Often only one or two children attended each grade, so the pressure for competition remained minimal, though everyone wanted to achieve. Most lessons were memorized and children knew what was to be expected in the next grade because they had heard their elder brothers and sisters recite lessons the year before.

In an age before calculators, students excelled at mental arithmetic and in the ability to add long columns of figures in their heads in a matter of seconds. As for literature, **Appleton's Fifth Reader**, required in the eighth grade, lists in the table of contents such literary gems as: "Liberty or Death" by Patrick Henry, "Dialogue With the Gout" by Oliver Goldsmith, "Speech on Brutus" by William Shakespeare, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's "A Rill From the Town Pump."

Bill May from the S Bar S Ranch near Springs, Colorado, explains the success of country schools in this way:

> I knew many of the people who received their education under such conditions and (as far as 'well-rounded' education is concerned) most of them were among the **best educated** people I've ever known.

Of course there were numerous factors responsible for the quality of education that came out of this system:

First—there had to be a dedicated teacher; and one that really knew how to organize and supervise.

Second—the quality of texts used; 'McGuffey's Fifth Reader' was far superior to anything that the average high school student is exposed to today.

Third—the individual personal attention received by the pupil (this relates directly to the teacher's capabilities as 'supervisor'; most of the actual teaching of the younger children was done by the older students, who—by the time they had finished the eighth grade—were well qualified to be teachers themselves).

Fourth—the almost unlimited opportunity for the 'gifted' pupil to advance. By having the chance to hear older students recite (after their own assignment was completed) it was not uncommon for children in the fifth or sixth grade (and sometimes even younger) to have mastered practically everything presented to the seventh and eighth graders.

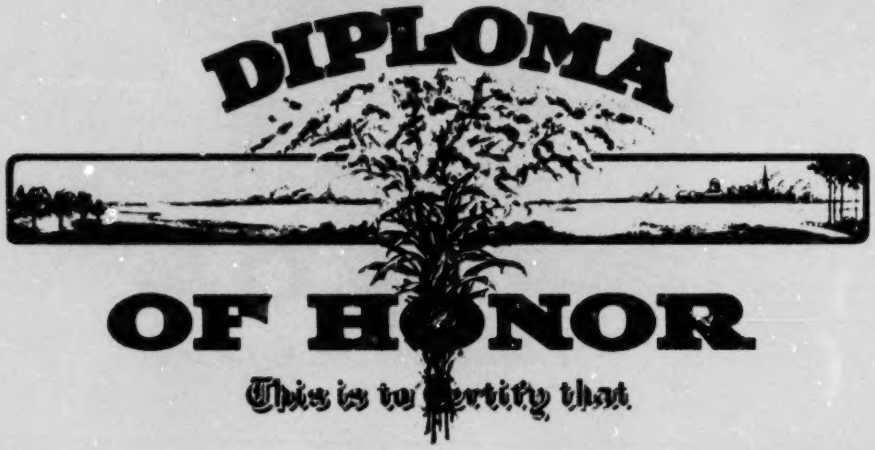
Many of the country schools in this area were summer schools as it would have been impractical for chidren to commute (by the means available in those days—afoot or horseback) during our severe winter months. In my own case it would have been impossible to ride the three miles thru the hills with three or four feet of snow covering a trail that wasn't even kept open in winter.

Some schools were located so that all the pupils were within reasonable walking or riding distance along maintained (of course this was often just for horse-drawn sled traffic) roads, and were conducted as winter schools.

In some cases, where the boys of a family—say, from the fifth grade on up—were needed in the hayfield, it was necessary for them to ride (horseback—usually not for more than six or eight miles) or perhaps board with some family in town and attend winter school in town.

If in Colorado older boys rode many miles to school and then proceeded to help the younger children, the same was true in South Dakota. Floyd Cocking in **Memoirs of South Dakota Retired Teachers** vividly recalls his first year teaching at the Pringle School in Custer County.

> One of my seventh grade girls was pretty sharp and I had to hustle to keep her busy and challenged. And then I found the solution. Two of my fifth graders seemed to need more personal help than I had time to give so I had Anne start helping them. Within a week, she was my full-fledged teacher aide during parts of the day. She loved it. So did I. And everyone profited from it. Of course, she did not get paid. But she got a better education.
>
> It seems we were to teach about six or eight subjects to each grade level .... That would make twenty-five or thirty classes a day during a period from eight till three. Could you believe our shortest class was only five minutes? That was spelling. And our longest was twenty minutes. That was because I believe in a good math background. Some other doubling up had to be done so I put the fifth and sixth grades together in the same class for history the first semester and covered the fifth grade work. The second semester we did the sixth grade work.
>
> The county superintendent prepared the final exams, mailed them to the president of the school board who delivered them to the teacher the day of the final exam. After the student had written the examination, the papers were returned to the county office for marking. And if the grades were too low, the student flunked out and had to repeat another year....The system seemed to encourage both the student and teacher to do a good job.



Mildred Forster

Of School District No. 221, Richardson County, Nebraska, is awarded this testimonial for

Punctual and Regular Attendance

having earned five Certificates of Award and is therefore entitled to this diploma.

Given at Falls City, Nebraska, this 26th day of June 1922

L. P. Grundy
County Superintendent

Teacher

SCHOOL DAYS

First, can anyone tell why the one-room country school is famous? That's right; it is where millions of Americans had their first brush with education, where they first had to learn that Montana is west of Mississippi, that nine times nine is eighty-one, and that words which ought to end in "ible" invariably double-cross you and end in "able."

And what else? Yes, because it was to schools like this that some of our most successful citizens trudged heroic distances through snow piling higher every time they tell it....It is a good thing that Mrs. McGuire loves the work, for this weather-beaten schoolhouse has all the shortcomings of its kind. The plumbing is outdoors, the washbowl on the porch, someone has to tote coal for Big Joe, the stove. The pay is thin soup; it has been as low as $420 a year, and even now is only $878 a year.

NORMAN ROCKWELL VISITS A
COUNTRY SCHOOL
November 2, 1946

The Norman Rockwell Book
Indianapolis, Indiana:
Curtis Publishing Company, Inc., 1977

Questions like this tested whether or not the Course of Study had been followed. They were "Quarterly Uniform Test and Review Questions, December, 1910" from South Dakota.

Grade VIII arithmetic: A man bought at a sale a team of horses for $375. The terms of the sale were, 1 year's time at 6% interest, or 2% off for cash. The man accepted the latter condition and went to a bank and borrowed just enough money to pay the cash amount paying 8% interest. Did he gain or lose by choosing the second condition, and how much?

Grade VII spelling: Spell ten words to be pronounced by the teacher from a list made up by her from those words quite generally missed when the regular lessons were given, but which have since been studied.

Grade VI reading: You will write from memory one stanza from either "Barefoot Boy," "The Children's Hour," "Ode to a Waterfowl," or "Star Spangled Banner."

Grade III geography: Write how you could make a little pool of water from running in the street or road after a rain. If you have ever seen a lake or a stream of water, tell how you think it came there.

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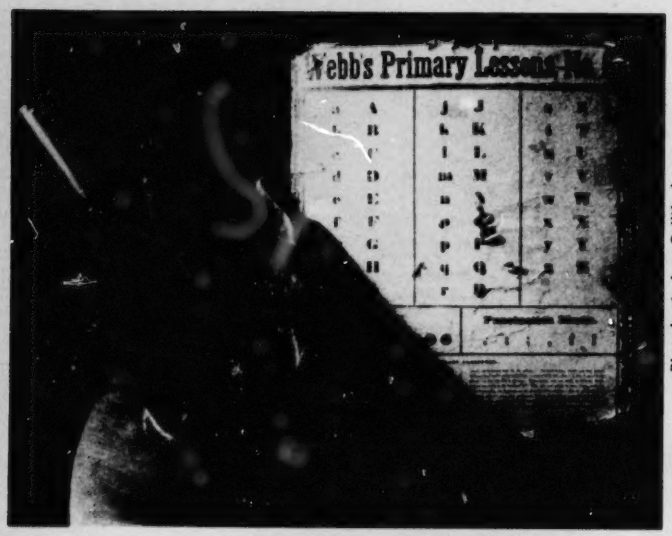

Photo by Andrew Gulliford

Photo Courtesy of Utah State Historical Society

Class of Fillmore School, Utah

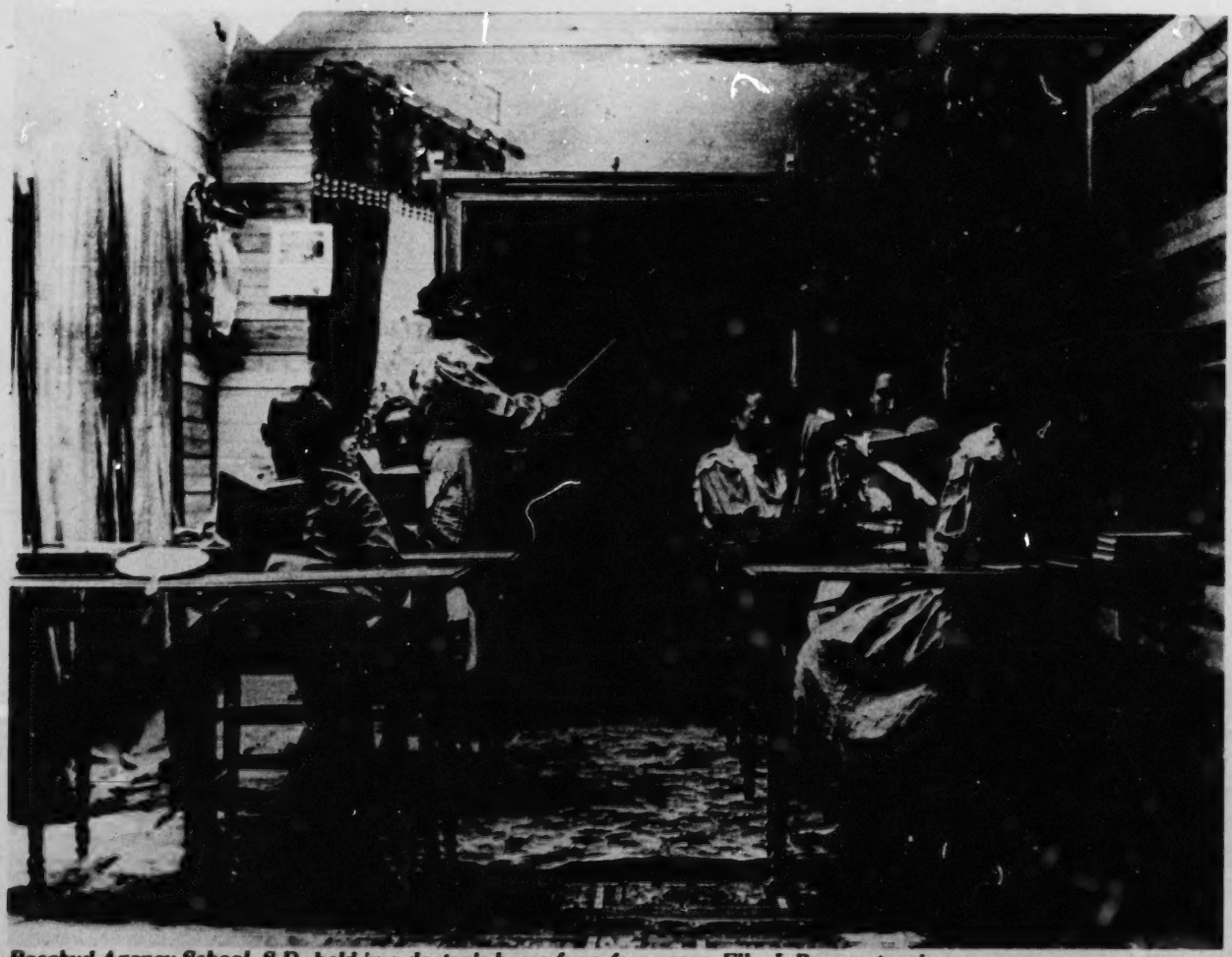

Photo Courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society

Rosebud Agency School, S.D. held in a doctor's home for a few years. Ella J. Bruner, teacher

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Boys Will Be Boys. . . .

In Wyoming several times rattlesnake killing was mentioned as a recreational pursuit, but not as frequently as drowning out and catching gophers. This was not an activity that today's physical education would sanction, but in the past there were different sets of rules and sidelights to the "sport." A water pail and access to water was needed. When the rodent was seen racing into one of the many gopher holes on the prairie, the alarm was sounded. All holes in the immediate area would be plugged with dirt and rocks and buckets of water poured into the gophers' sanctuaries. After a number of pails went down, the gopher emerged to keep from drowning, and would race for his life. There were several variants of the rules. Some students of Williams School in Albany County recall roasting captured chipmunks. Another in Lincoln County tells of holding a wire noose over the hole and catching the emerging gopher, then branding the critter with a small iron or wire.

Milton Riske

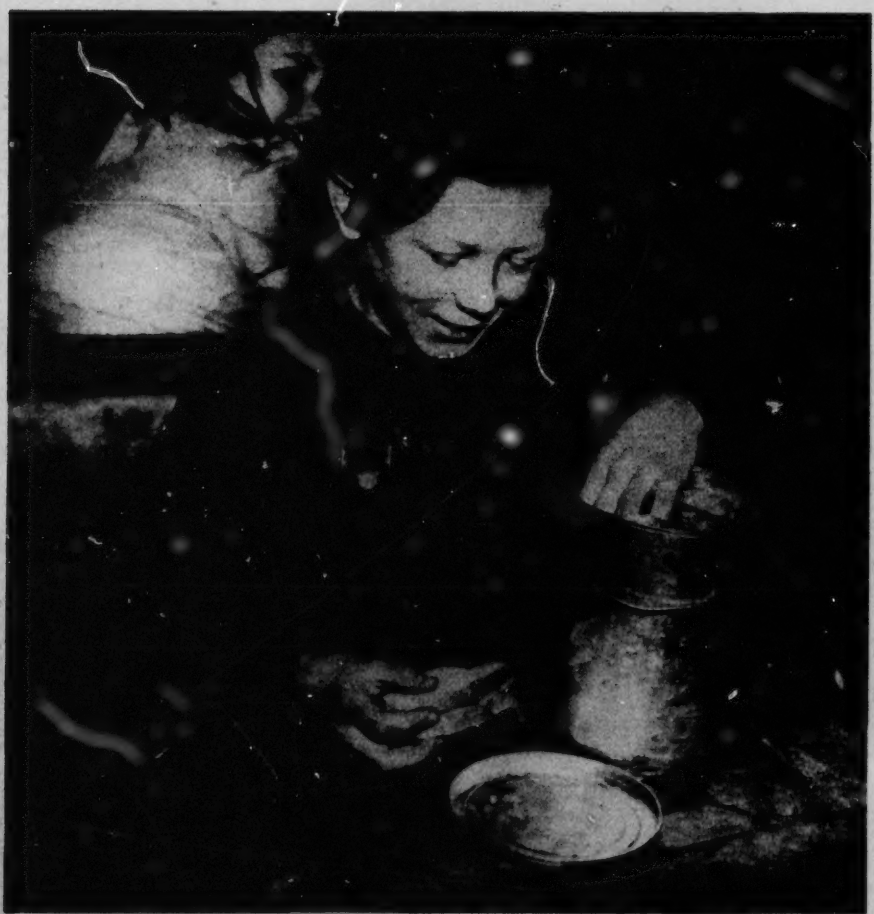

Photo Courtesy of Farm Security Administration, Library of Congress

Morton School, ND.

Verda Arnold in **Our Yesterdays** described taking the final eighth grade examination in South Dakota.

> In the spring of 1922 a decree went out from somewhere that all seventh and eighth grade pupils must go to the county seat to write their final examination. There were four of us from Lame Johnny School. Mason Peterson, Peter Sieger, Evelyn Maxon and me. Poor little country kids. We were all afraid of the big city. The idea of a FINAL test was bad enough. But to have to write such a test in a strange big building—oh no! Miss Carter assured us we all knew enough to pass. Then gave us added relief by offering to go along and just be there. We all passed.

The noon meal was a break in the school-day's hard work. Once lunch was eaten, the children played games, with the teacher usually playing with them. For these children so isolated on their ranches, this playtime must have been very good for them and filled a real social need. Sometimes recess would be skipped so the whole school could take a longer noon hour and go to a nearby pond to skate or a hill to slide down.

There were no hot lunch programs in those days. Most lunches consisted of a jelly sandwich with an apple or a plain piece of cake or a cookie; no waxed paper wrappings in those days. Fried-egg sandwiches were big, with homemade bread. Sometimes biscuits, cornbread, or cold pancakes were all some children had, with lard instead of butter. Times were tough.

In one community the five or six mothers took turns sending the ingredients for a hot dish, which the teacher heated on a kerosene stove, and all the children shared. Often it was only plain potato soup; milk and potatoes were two things most people had plenty of, but sometimes it was vegetable soup, macaroni and cheese, or hot cocoa.

Dorothy Harmon in **Our Yesterdays** said:

> ...Often our bread was frozen at noon, as we had to leave it (our lunches) in the anteroom. But there was a huge stove in the center of the room....We would toast our bread on top of the stove, and at least we had hot toast. The butter would melt and smoke....but Mrs. Van Pelt never said anything about it.

Faye Gashatt Lewis in **Nothing to Make A Shadow** adds:

> A concomitant of rural schooldom was the dinner pail...a lard or syrup pail, a half-gallon size for one person, a gallon size for several. We always preferred to take individual

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Photo Courtesy of Wyoming State Archives, Museums and Historical Dept.

Diamond Flat School, Wyo. 1918-19

COUNTRY SCHOOL GAMES

With no money for playground equipment or even a bat and ball during the early years of country schools, students and teachers had to invent inexpensive games that could be played by students of all ages.

Crack the Whip—All the students held hands in a long line. The student at one end would pivot and all the students would swing back and forth until the student at the end of the line lost his grip and the whip had been cracked.

Pom Pom Pull Away—Two lines of students formed on either side of one student who was "it." He called any player by name and said, "Ted Leigh. Pom Pom Pull Away! Come away, or I'll fetch you away!" Then the student must run across the line and not be tagged by the one who is "it."

Steal the Bacon—Similar to Pom Pom Pull Away in that two lines of students are formed, but instead of a student being "it" a cap or scarf is placed in the middle. At a signal from the teacher one student runs from each side to grab the cap. The winner then gets to signal "go" for the next round.

Annie Over—Students divided up on both sides of the one-room school. A student with a ball would yell, "Annie, Annie Over" and throw the ball over the roof. Whoever caught it would run around the side of the school and try and hit a player from the opposite team.

Fox and Geese—Often played in the snow, a large circle is tramped down with spokes in it like a wheel. A fox is picked from one of the students and he tries to tag one of the geese as they run in groups of three's and four's down the trail with their hands on each other's shoulders. The goose who is tagged becomes the fox and the game starts all over again.

* * * * *

The origin of the phrase "toeing the line" comes from country schools where a chalk line was often drawn on the floor. Children who were reciting had to keep their toes on the line to avoid twisting their bodies around as they recited.

Smithsonian, March, 1981

HERR SCHOOL NUMBER TWO
District No. 11
Harris Township, Sheridan County, North Dakota
1927—1928

ALVENA HANSON, Teacher

PUPILS

Lena Herr	Elmer Herr
Olga Herr	Elsie Herr
Reuben Herr	Lydia Herr
Ernest Herr	Theodore Herr

Johnnie Herr

SCHOOL BOARD

John J. Krien, President
Anna Halbeck, Treasurer
Pearl Lasher, Clerk

Peter Halbeck—Jake Houser, Directors

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Photo Courtesy of Wyoming State Archives, Museums and Historic Dept.

Girls skiing in Jackson, Wyo.

lunches, but that was a luxury Mother was not much in favor of, as it meant five dinner pails to be scrubbed out each evening and well aired for the next day, so usually she reduced the number to two, or three at the most...The enjoyment of these school lunches had to be sharply whetted by hunger for they were anything but palatable in their own right. The flavor of sandwiches is not improved by remaining packed tightly in a pail for a half day, even if the glass of fruit sauce or preserves has not been spilled over them by the swinging of said pail on the way to school, or by its having been kicked over in the rumpus attendant upon the removal of wraps and overshoes. Cookies so closely packed go through a peculiar softening process making them altogether different from the crunchy discs Mother had baked. The apple, if any, was probably eaten at recess. Other children's food usually looked more attractive than one's own and there was a universal bartering of lunches...The liquid part of our lunch was cold water carried in a pail from a well a half-mile down the hill and drunk from a common dipper.

Country schools in Colorado were the products of new settlements in the mining camps and new homesteaders on the plains. Whether in the mining camps or on small, 160-acre farms, living was marginal at best, and young boys either started work with a pick and shovel or took turns behind a plow. Out of necessity, girls stayed at home to help with raising the children, growing gardens, feeding stock, and canning fruit.

Education was a luxury, and teachers and county officials had to beg parents to let their children attend school on a regular basis. Some schools only opened their doors after the peak farming season, particularly harvest time, was over. One log school, still standing near Montrose, Colorado, only opened during June, July and August. During the other months, school was preempted by too much farming, or too much snow.

Stan Leftwich, a former school teacher, remembers those days. Stan retired as assistant commissioner in charge of field services for the Colorado State Department of Education. He remembers, in his teaching days, actively encouraging parents in his district to send their children to school. Once they got to school, however, the first order of business was to take care of their physical problems. He quickly initiated a daily cleansing routine which included applying salves for head lice, scabies, and impetigo. Children who caught pinkeye from cattle received the same medicine that the livestock would have had—boric acid. Stan recalls, "We would be put in jail today for the nursing we did in those years, but what were we to do? No organized health services existed."

The children were quick tempered and mischievous. Many a faint-hearted teacher left in disgrace early in the term because of a particularly raucous prank devised by the older boys. Olive Sallady, who taught in the Peach Valley School in Colorado, remembers, "My first few weeks were pretty hectic. I was greatly relieved any morning I didn't open my desk and find a mouse, snake, or frog. They were all dead, of course. By the time the kids found out that didn't frighten me, we settled down."

When one child became ill sooner or later the whole school would be itching, scratching, sneezing, and coughing. But, despite the pranks and the diseases, students learned in country schools. There was a strong desire to learn and to pass the eighth grade examinations. Country schools were a success. Students learned not only the basics but also those important values of friendship, cooperation, and compromise.

* * * * *

Material for this section not otherwise identified came from staff member Caroline Hatton, Edgemont, South Dakota; Joanne Dodds, Pueblo, Colorado; and Andrew Gulliford.

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Photo Courtesy of Utah State Historical Society

Molen School, Emery County, UT, 1907

"When I started school up there in that little ol' white schoolhouse, the teacher, she had a little hand bell she would ring when she let us out for recess, ya know? To call us back to class why, she'd come out there and ring the bell, and when I went to school, course that was my first year at school up there, and I went to school with a little slate and pencil, and of course, being a nice little boy, I had a little bottle of water and a rag, so you could wash your slate off and use it again, ya know. Course after we'd been in school a very short while, we never carried the water nor the rag around, we just spit on the slate and wiped it off with our sleeves and it was just as good as new."

TEACHERS: THEIR ROLES, RULES, AND RESTRICTIONS

It is quite possible that it was never intended by the good Lord that I should be a schoolteacher. At least not so soon after the turn of the Twentieth Century, when they were definitely a distinct species .... Early in the 1900's, women teachers suffered most of the restrictions of nuns, with none of the advantages they enjoyed .... Nobody defined exactly what a teacher's place was, but everyone knew she should keep it.

Maude Frazier
Autobiography, Nevada

Imagine a country school! Usually there was only an old coal stove in the center of the room for heat. A blackboard or two stood against the west wall with windows to the east. Rows of hardwood seats stuck to the floor and around back were the outhouses: one for the boys and one for the girls, although the hornets did not care in which one they daubed their nest!

To say teaching conditions were primitive is an understatement. From the opening of the West after the Civil War, miners, ranchers, and immigrants poured into the river valleys, traversed the plains, and climbed the steep mountain passes. They brought with them saloons and dance hall girls, railroads and coal mines, coke ovens and general stores, but they also brought their wives, who wanted something more than tent communities overflowing with liquor and "fallen angels."

Women wanted schools for their children. Unlike the East, where churches were the first community structures to be built, in the West, schools took priority. The wives realized they were at the edge of civilization, and the faster they brought culture and decorum to the boom areas of the West, the sooner they would feel at home instead of feeling lost in some pine woods outpost in the land that God forgot.

In southern Nevada schools had interesting beginnings. The mining metropolis of Rhyolite was no exception. Harold Weight states:

> Rhyolite's school system was started, according to Peter A. Busch, at the first town meeting—held in a frame tent when the town was only a few hours old. A miner in back said: 'See here boys, if we're going to have a camp that will win, we got to have a school. I got three kids wild as burros, and I want to get them in school.' A school district was organized that fall but county funds were unavailable until after a school census was to be taken, months in the future. So Rhyolite raised funds by subscription, donations, dances and the box socials. School was temporarily discontinued at the end of April, 1907, when Miss E. Louise Presser had to take her vacation from Rhyolite. 'Miss Presser has had the work of three teachers during the past few months,' the Herald explained, 'the enrollment reaching near 90, teaching half the pupils in the morning and the rest in the afternoon. The nervous strain was more than she could bear.' Part of the strain just might have been the experience of having the new first schoolhouse 'blown off by its pins' in September 1906 by one of Rhyolite's infamous winds. 'It was the most unkindest cut of all, after the trouble over the start of school,' mourned the Herald. But the school was restored to its foundations and education proceeded.

The stereotyped role of the country schoolteacher is the single female schoolmarm. In fact, male teachers were much preferred in the early schools, partly because of tradition and partly because it was thought that they alone could control the large farm boys who attended school only in winter. Women were employed primarily to teach in the spring and summer terms when only smaller children were in school. According to Wayne E. Fuller, in 1871, 52% of Nebraska teachers and 47.2% of Kansas teachers were men.

There were more women than men available to teach, however, especially in the mining camps, and because of this, salaries were unequal. In 1880 male teachers in Kansas were paid about $6.50 more per month; in 1914 they were paid $17.00 more. In Nebraska in 1914, men were paid $21.89 more a month than women.

In spite of the low wages, women, like men, were drawn to the West and the new frontiers of bonanza wheat farms and sprawling gold camps. Usually teachers came from the East, with their steamer trunks, their petticoats, and even a parasol or two! Of these hundreds of teachers who dedicated their lives to educating the children of Italian miners, Mexican laborers, German farmers, and Scottish ranchers, a few have become living legends.

Ruth Bradley Wilkinson arrived in Tempiute, Nevada, dressed in a floppy picture hat and silk stockings. As she peered down the road and saw nothing but tents, she sensed she wasn't exactly dressed the part. One of those tents was her home and her school, equipped only with a cot and a stove. She ate up at the boarding house; one woman and forty-five men. Because she, of course, wore dresses, it always was a bit awkward scrambling for a place at the table. To take a shower, Miss Wilkinson had to go down to the mill. While inside, a man would stand watch so that no one would take a peek at her. Then they would post a man on the watcher to make sure he didn't take a peek.

That first night there, it started to rain a little. She was a bit homesick and "felt funny" so she went up to the boarding house where everyone visited and sang. By the time she got back to the tent, it was raining harder—the tent was leaking, and she spent the night moving her cot around, trying to find a dry spot to sleep.

In 1909, Esma Lewis boarded the train in Dongola, Illinois, and at the age of 19, left home for the first time to teach school at the mouth of Divide Creek near Silt, Colorado. She stayed with a member of the school board and his family. To this day, Mrs. Lewis remembers the sharp, lonely howls of coyotes whose yips would roll across the mesa on crisp, clear, moonlit nights.

Mrs. Lewis taught for sixty years in Garfield County. Like countless other country school teachers, she came into a new country and somehow never left. In Wyoming, there's a saying about attractive single female schoolteachers: "Once they get off the train—they never get back on!"

By the time the plains were open to settlement, the schoolmarm was already an established feature of American education. As early as 1845, Catharine Beecher, daughter of a prominent New England family of educators and clergymen, called for the recruitment of women into the teaching profession. Her highly influential pamphlet, "The Duty of American Women to Their Country," decried the shortage of teachers on the frontier and predicted that men would never fill the gap. "It is WOMAN who is to come in at this emergency and meet the demand. Woman, whom experience and testing have shown to be the best, as well as the cheapest, guardian and teacher of childhood." By the hundreds and later by the thousands, American women—especially those of New England—answered the call of Miss Beecher.

There were others reasons for women to "answer the call." "In my home town," said Elsie Petsel Hallock, in **The Sway of the School Bell**, published by Ainsworth, Nebraska Retired Teacher's Association,

> the only highly respectable jobs for girls after they graduated from high school were nursing, teaching, or clerking in a store. Since my dad ran a general store, and since I was somewhat familiar with that, clerking wouldn't be any fun, and

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Photo Courtesy of Helen Holt, Sandy Valley, Nevada

17-year-old Violet Oppedyk Tracht at her first school, NEV

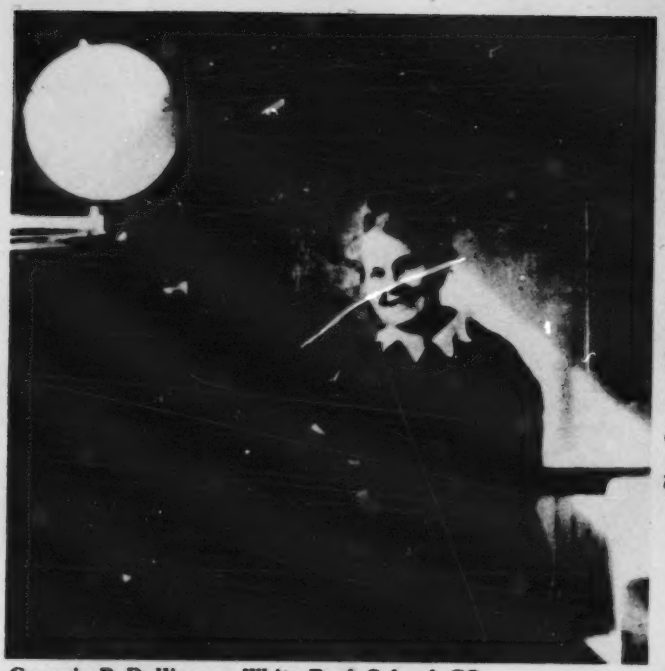
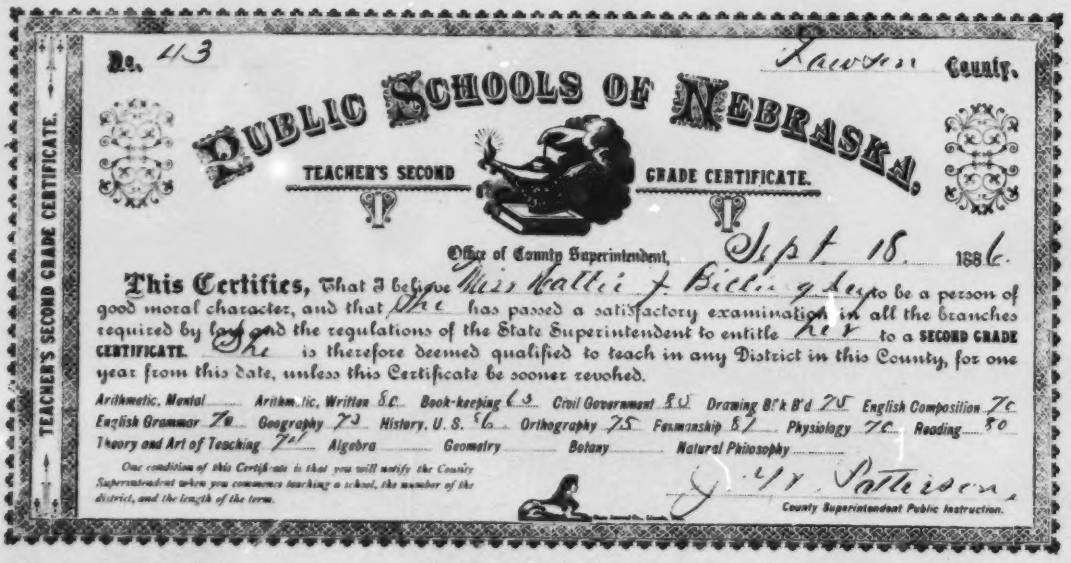


Photo Courtesy of Pueblo Library District

Georgia P. Dallimore, White Rock School, CO

RULES FOR TEACHERS
1872

1. *Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys.*
2. *Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the day's session.*
3. *Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to the individual taste of the pupils.*
4. *Men teachers may take one evening each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they go to church regularly.*
5. *After ten hours in school, the teachers may spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.*
6. *Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed.*
7. *Every teacher should lay aside from each day a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society.*
8. *Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop will give good reason to suspect his worth, intention, integrity and honesty.*
9. *The teacher who performs his labor faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of twenty-five cents per week in his pay, providing the Board of Education approves.*



TEACHER'S SECOND GRADE CERTIFICATE.

No. 413 Dawson County.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NEBRASKA.

TEACHER'S SECOND GRADE CERTIFICATE.

Office of County Superintendent, Sept 18, 1886.

This Certifies, That I believe Miss Hattie J. Bell of legal to be a person of good moral character, and that She has passed a satisfactory examination in all the branches required by law and the regulations of the State Superintendent to entitle her to a SECOND GRADE CERTIFICATE. She is therefore deemed qualified to teach in any District in this County, for one year from this date, unless this Certificate be sooner revoked.

Arithmetic, Mental ____ Arithmetic, Written 85 Book-keeping 65 Civil Government 80 Drawing Bl'k Bd 75 English Composition 70
English Grammar 70 Geography 73 History, U. S. 96 Orthography 75 Penmanship 87 Physiology 70 Reading 80
Theory and Art of Teaching 70 Algebra ____ Geometry ____ Botany ____ Natural Philosophy ____

One condition of this Certificate is that you will notify the County Superintendent when you commence teaching a school, the number of the district, and the length of the term.

J. H. Patterson,
County Superintendent Public Instruction.

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Photo Courtesy of Wyoming State Archives, Museums and Historical Dept.

Frances Johnson in the doorway of Hargreaves School, Wyoming. c. 1911

Photo Courtesy of Denver Public Library

Slate Creek School, Colorado. c. 1894

by the time I'd completed my normal training in high school I'd still be too young to go into nurse's training. I was going to be respectable and was going to earn a living. So, I became a teacher.

Therefore in the fall of 1924, I began teaching school in the James' District about ten miles north of Norden, Nebraska.

I had a room to myself, with a curtain for a door and a kerosene lamp for light, upstairs. For a mattress, ticking had been filled with freshly mowed hay. As nights got colder, I left the imprint of my body deep in the hay. The farther I could snuggle down in the hay, the warmer it was, so in the mornings, I was careful not to smooth out the imprint of my body—the deeper the dent, the better. The kerosene lamp never had very much oil in it—a hint, I suppose, that I shouldn't have a light on very long.

There were a few 'play parties' that winter. The kitchen would be cleared of furniture, and the young neighborhood people would come in for games. We would sing and circle around in a manner to conform with the words. When a young fellow wanted to take me to another party at another home, I wasn't permitted to go, so I didn't ask permission again.

To get to the schoolhouse, we rode a wooden wagon pulled by two friendly horses, although the grey one had a physical handicap and was mentally disturbed, too. It wasn't exactly warm sitting up on a wooden seat in sub-zero temperatures for the three-mile drive. That was the proper place for the teacher to sit—beside the driver. We crossed a lush hay meadow where in the spring of the year we could hear and see grouse and prairie chickens puffing out their necks and booming, dancing, and stamping around their chosen friends. Once in a while a coyote would be seen, and I learned to distinguish between the song of a male and female meadowlark.

Of course the schoolhouse was a small, one-room, oblong affair, with a door in the south that didn't quite fit or keep out the wind and weather. The room had a round stove in the center. There were six windows—three on the east and three on the west. Naturally the children faced me at my desk, in the north, placed a little to the left of center. (It was my understanding that that was where the teacher's desk was suppose to stay.) The children were used to having their two-seater desks—with hinged seats—the way they were. They couldn't be moved. There were two other little two-seaters at the ends of two paths out behind the schoolhouse, furnished with last season's Sears catalogs.

Lunches were taken to school in tin syrup pails and red rectangular Union Leader pipe tobacco boxes with handles. My lunch pail was a fairly new gallon-sized pail. When the lunch boxes were opened at noon, the odor of escaping molecules was sometimes quite overpowering. The sulphur smell of deviled eggs fighting with that of the occasional onion in a hurry to escape tight fitting buckets encouraged us to get out in the air of the playground as soon as possible after lunch.

It was quite usual for teachers' pay to include room and board with the teacher shuttled from home to home, usually sleeping with one or more of the children. She stayed longest where there was the greatest number of children and frequently the least room and food.

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TEACHERS' SALARIES

The school reports throughout the 1900's and 1910's continue to show the problems with salaries. In 1906 the smaller school districts reported that teachers made between $30 and $100 a month. The teachers were only paid for the month they taught, and quite often the schools only ran five or six months, so the total salary for the year was only $180 to $600 a year.

By 1909 salaries had gone up a little bit. In Beaver County, Utah the range was $40 to $125 a month. That was also about the range of salaries in Piute, Rich, Carbon, and San Juan County and most teachers were on the lower end of the scale. Salaries stayed at that level or a little above through most of the 1910's.

Increased educational standards for certification during the 1920's were accompanied by moderately rising salaries. The eight-month school term was now standard in rural schools, so part of the increase merely reflected the longer term. Nevertheless, rural teachers' salaries in South Dakota advanced on the average from $771.20 per year in 1920 to $905.50 in 1930. In the 1930's, the decade of hardship due to the Great Depression and the drought that will be ever remembered as the Dirty Thirties, teachers' salaries plunged. The average had fallen to $627.70 by 1933 and continued to drop to as low as $40 per month in 1936. Salaries did not recover their 1920's high until 1943-44.

Districts paid teachers in warrants which the teachers then took to local banks to cash. Banks always checked the status of the district account before redeeming the warrant, and during the Great Depression and minimal tax collection, many of those warrants weren't worth the paper they were written on. Teachers then had the gloomy option of not getting paid and letting the warrant collect interest at the bank until the district could redeem it, or cashing their warrants at a 20% loss in pay, letting the bank profit by the difference and the interest the bank then held the warrant.

As late as 1948 in Moffat County, Colorado a rural teacher is quoted as saying, "I wish that we teachers might some day reach the salary scale held by [illegible] in this country."

Photo Courtesy of American Heritage Center, Univ. of Wyoming

Old Schoolhouse in Glencoe, Wyo.

Living in a single bedroom was not one of the specified rules; it was an economic necessity .... Such restrictions left little room for freedom. One did not take the liberty of entertaining friends nor undertaking any noisy activity in someone else's private home. The room was simply a place to retire after a day's work at school. During the depression, it was unthinkable for a couple of young women to live in an apartment where they could entertain as they pleased.

Phoebe Nater wrote in **Koshapan** of her Nebraska experiences:

> Frigid winter weather brought more problems .... The kitchen door was sealed shut in below zero weather and an army blanket was draped over the door and tacked in places to keep the door covered and the cracks around the door sealed over to keep out the cold. The only other possible door available in the house to the outdoors was the one in the teacher's bedroom. This door was warped out of shape, just jam it at the bottom as far as it would go shut. It lacked four inches at the top of being closed. The door hung with icicles and heavy frost, but that did not matter ....

Perhaps country school teachers had to contend with poor living conditions because they were so young. In his article on "Country School Teaching on the Sod-House Frontier," Wayne E. Fuller states, "Both the Kansas and Nebraska school laws required that teachers be at least sixteen years old before they began to teach, but it was not uncommon for them to begin at fifteen or even younger, particularly in the 1870's when the demand for teachers outran the supply. But even at the turn of the century and into the early 1900's, Kansas and Nebraska country schoolteachers were remarkedly young. So rapidly did they enter and leave the profession that their teaching careers, usually cut short by matrimony, were over by the time they were twenty." As late as 1919 a Nebraska study showed that the median age of that state's schoolteachers was only twenty-one.

An advertisement was placed in the Tonopah, Nevada "Bonanza" in 1901 that stated they had 20 applicants for the position of teacher....However, they were especially looking for an "old maid" because she would probably teach the term out and there would be no danger of her getting married in camp. The Reno paper picked up on the story and addressed an item to the "Three Old Maids of Reno," urging them to apply for the job in hopes that they might be able to marry one of the Tonopah millionaires.

As humorous as this may sound, most teachers did not marry millionaires, and life was not all that glamorous in some of the isolated areas of the West. In **100 Years on the Muddy**, A. L. Hafner discusses the problems of keeping teachers in Moapa Valley, Nevada:

> There were many teachers brought in at the turn of the century, but their efforts were in vain because of the meanness and trickery played on them by the students. The teachers stayed on the average of two or three months or less until John Crosby came. 'Johnny Bull' was a nickname given him by the students. He was a large, athletic, muscular man, and was the only one that was able to control the students or scare them into learning.

Male teachers in Nebraska also had to be quick with their fists as well as their wits. Frank Grady recalled some features of student discipline:

> The first teacher in Raymond school [Nebraska] was run out by the boys, who used stones as weapons of assault. The second met the same gang, but when he had soundly thrashed one boy, and the youth's father coming to take up the battle shared the same fate, the reign of terror ended abruptly, and a new

This is one of the letters written by Mabel Townsley to her good friend Helen Myers. Mabel taught in a rural school near Hartford, South Dakota, 1899 to 1900.

February 17, 1900

My Dear Helen:

I'm going to have "Spellin' School" and Exercises on Washington's Birthday. Won't you come? The children clamored for a "Dilogue," but as I couldn't find one that suited me, we'll have just plain speakin'. I've enjoyed training the youngsters immensely.

I've only been to town once or twice since Christmas and the prospects for tomorrow are gloomy.

Sat. A.M. Prospects are cold, but hopeful. I'm to get ready to hail the first neebor that passes. You see, I want some red, white and blue for Thursday, so I have a good excuse for my anxiety to get to town. It ruins the handwriting of an expert to have to use his lap, a table, a chair, or a shelf for a desk. I don't believe I can ever write neatly again.

As for the matter, I'm afraid I'm losing all my ambition lately, for I can't force myself to read or write anything worthwhile. The day at school goes as rapidly as it used to when I was the sponge instead of the ladle. I feel considerable pride in being able to say this, for the first day was a whole month long, and the decrease in length has been regular and gradual, very gradual. Then, when four o'clock comes, I have a romping game of tag with the children (which always makes me wonder at myself); split my kindling (and occasionally my thumb); sweep my dusty little room; close the shutters, lock the door, shoulder my dinner pail, and swing out. This last expression is not meant for slang; it is descriptive of my gait. When I reach home, I scrub for an hour in a room 8 degrees below zero, with hard, limey water. By this time, it is nearly supper time. After this meal, where I eat enough for a man, there is only an hour or an hour and a half until bedtime (8:30). Now, I have read of men who have acquired two or three languages at the rate of twenty odd minutes a day. I have just read an inspiring account in a Sunday School paper of a poor bookkeeper who became a great naturalist by studying as he rode to and from his business. These stories have made an impression on me, but it was too deep; it brought on depression.

That hour and a half, conscientiously set aside for German and Emerson, is frittered away by magazine stories and yawns, which vainly try to refresh a collapsed nature. It makes me tired, too, for if I can't teach this little school which is at least not difficult to control, and for which I do not have to work at home, without feeling so good-for-nothing over it, what will I ever amount to in a really responsible position?

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Mabel Townsley

And, gracious Phoebe! Chaste Diana! where is your protection! In the same bunch with your triumphant introduction to the "Norsk gentlemen," came a letter from Helen Smith, confessing to the ponderous attentions of a baldheaded lawyer! And Bess owns up to two!! And Theresa is moving under the same roof with the young man of the town! Poor me! My cavalier considered himself finally squelched and ist ganz verschwunden. I told you about my forty-year-old bachelor with the good farm, didn't I? How I rode to school standing up in a wagon with him the first time I ever saw him? How the next week he inquired of Mr. Love if I had company to the concert the next night, and how he called at the school house that morning (in a clean collar) to offer himself? It was the next to the last night of school before Christmas so I had to make my excuses, — and he never came back!

I ran away two weeks ago. I had reached town for the first time in three weeks, and on ten minutes notice, I went up to Mitchell to attend a meeting of the State Y. W. C. A. Com. of which I am Vice Pres. for next year. I stayed over Sunday. It seemed so good to be among students again even those of hostile colors. The three Hartford boys who are attending school there were wild over seeing someone from home.

The sheep are making things interesting now. There are three hundred or more, and forty five new lambs. The men — one of them, have to stay up all night to take care of the babies. They bring the weak ones in to warm them, and it sounds like a human nursery. One night there were four lambs in the kitchen. They gave a free concert. No one slept much that night.

The children are beginning to shout so I'll stop.

Yours Most Lovingly, Mabel.

TEACHER TRAINING AND CERTIFICATES

By the late 1800's, many teachers came not from the East, but were daughters of the first great rush of homesteaders. Educated on farms and in country schools, as soon as they graduated they began to teach—often in the same school they had attended.

Gradually standards improved. County teacher's exams were required. To prepare for the awesome, all-day tests, teachers attended county teacher's institutes where courses in psychology and discipline were always well attended.

The second grade certificate was granted to a candidate who passed examination in orthography, reading, writing, geography, English grammar, physiology, hygiene, and history of the United States. It was good for one year and could not be renewed for more than four years. The candidate for a first grade certificate had to pass examinations in civil government, didactics, elementary bookkeeping and current events. The first grade certificate was granted for two years and could be renewed twice (or more on special permission of the county superintendent). Candidates had to be of good moral character and at least 17 years of age.

The state superintendent of public instruction could grant state certificates good for teaching in any school in the state to those persons who passed an examination in algebra, geometry, natural philosophy, physiology and hygiene, drawing, civil government, didactics, general history, and American literature. The character of the paper submitted in the examination was to determine the candidate's knowledge of English grammar, orthography, and penmanship. The candidate had to possess three years of experience. Graduates of the state normal school (which were post-eighth grade programs at that time) could receive the certificate without examination. The state certificates ran five years. No examination was required for renewal after the second state certificate. A life diploma could be granted to persons of still higher qualifications.

Phillip Brown

respect for the school was established.

> [Another teacher,] J. W. Kerns .... used to pull up the window and spit a gob of tobacco juice clean down to Main Street .... The discipline on the whole was pretty good .... There were no high-falooting laws, and the teacher could whale the very devil out of you if it would aid in you bringing (sic) to time.
>
> [Another teacher] was already in the school on New Years Day, and they threw brimstone—sulphur I reckon it's called—down the chimney and smoked him out, getting possession of the premises .... Quite a percentage of the big fellows considered the teacher Public Enemy Number One. The worst thing of all was when the parents took up the battle of the kids .... That happened quite often and they vowed that if the kids couldn't put the teacher out, they would. They usually got the worst of it, however.

In the instance of the McCarthy School, District 29 in Washington County, Nebraska, the teacher found it difficult controlling the seventy-five students. The larger boys, who normally would be farming, attended during the winter season. The teacher was driven out. Jimmy Van Duesen in taking his place laid a gun across the top of his desk and said, "Boys, I'm here for business—to teach." He had no trouble. Neither did Charles Wertz of Richland. He frequently took leaves of absence from his school to join cattle drives, to hunt horse thieves, to serve as a payroll courier, and to join posses searching for criminals. Meanwhile, he continued to attend college.

In Wyoming the younger country-school teachers were the butt of pranks by the older children and young men of the district. One teacher had recently had her hair bobbed, and the students, to tease her, placed the floor mop upside down and addressed the mop by the teacher's name.

One teacher, walking in the ranch yard in her best clothes, was roped by a cowboy and dragged into a mudhole. Two boys invited another teacher for a pancake breakfast where they added rags to the batter and oil to the coffee.

On occasion a spunky teacher would fight back. At one ranch the hired men would sneak into the teacher's room and tie her clothes into hard knots. Come morning she had to slip into borrowed clothes, overalls usually, to get to the school. The teacher retaliated by dumping an entire can of starch into the wash water for the hired men's long johns!

Yet the teacher was expected to be the source of all knowledge, to be ever resourceful, sincere, and courageous. When a patron

The Diary of Anna Webber: Early Day Teacher of Mitchell County

Edited by Lila Gravatt Scrimsher

Introduction

Anna Webber was born in Breckenridge (now Lyon) county, September 16, 1860, the daughter of William Ellsworth and Thankful Delila Webber. Economic circumstances forced the family to leave Kansas shortly after Anna's birth. They moved to Iowa where Anna's mother died and her father remarried. In 1872 the family returned to Kansas, settling in Center township of Mitchell county. The county had been organized in 1871 and was settled rapidly in the following years.

In the spring of 1881, Anna Webber passed the teachers' examinations given in Beloit, and was hired to teach the district school lying adjacent to the little settlement of Blue Hill, Center township. The term was for three months, May through July.

During the term Anna conscientiously kept a diary. It is here published, with original spelling and punctuation maintained.

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Monday, July 18.

O, My! This is the next to the last week of my school. O, I dread to have the last day come. Half Past Four. School is out for this day. We had Company again today. Mattie came up with me at noon, and s[t]ayed all the afternoon. her and I are going down to Mr. Andersons this evening. It does not seem near as lonesome, or dull since she has come. We went to Sunday School yesterday, and from there to see the Misses Goodykonts. I met more young folks there, than at any time since I have been here. We had quite a pleasant time, if we didn't have any dinner. There is a picnic next Saturday, and I would like to go, but I don't know whether I can or not. I have to many irons in the fire. I don't have half the time I could use, or it seems that way.

Tuesday, July 19.

Now if I don't have my hands full, I never did. it keeps my brains busy. Had company again. Harry has been here all day, Nellie since school was out. I am in trouble again. I do wish there was not so much quarling I could have so much more pleasure. Well it is late and I must go down. I expect they will be waiting supper for me. So goodnight old school-house.

Wednesday, July 20.

The wind blows so hard this morning. It allmost takes a persons breath. i dont know what will become of Kansas. It seems awful hard to. But maybe it will be all right, yet. Well it was so warm and disagreeable that I dismissed school a little after three. And as warm as it is, I have to wash this evening. So I had better don my bonnet and hie me down to the wash-tub, so as to get through as soon as possible.

Thursday, July 21.

It is nice and cool this morning, but I do not know how long it will stay so, till the sun gets a little higher, I expect .... Yesterday made things look 'brown' and I'll declare if I wasn't nearly cooked through. Harry is here today. Four O'clock. Well, this has been a nice day, for all it has been warm. It is clouding up for a rain, and I do hope We will get it. We need rain so bad, evry thing is nearly burned up. O, dear this is a hard place to live, this Kansas is. I wonder what in the world will become of all of us, anyway.

Friday, July 22.

I have only four days more of school. It is cool and pleasant this morning. I am sorry school is so near out. Well I have to scrub the floor this evening, for there is preaching here Sunday. And I have to iron, and get ready for the picnic tomorrow. I had a nice school this forenoon, but was not so pleasant this afternoon. I had to keep two scholars this evening, and that is not all I did for them, the little rascals. Well, if I dont hurry faster I won't get half my work done.

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came to school and wanted to know how to measure the amount of hay in a stack, the teacher had better find the answer.

A teacher soon learned that if a snake appeared in the schoolyard, the situation had to be attended to immediately. As the landlady where a teacher stayed remarked, "If a teacher hasn't enough sense and know-how to kill the snake, she had better go back where she came from. It is 20 miles to the closest doctor and death would arrive first."

According to Maude Linstrom Frandsen, who taught in rural schools near Brighton, Colorado, health problems were the responsibility of the teacher. "If a tooth needed to be pulled, a sticker removed, a broken fingernail cut, or a stomach was up-set, the teacher rose to the occasion. Epidemics could produce a disastrous situation. A child came to school with a rash. Since the child lived near, the child was sent home with a note. Within the hour the child and the mother were back. The mother said, 'If Susie has a disease, she caught it here at school so she will stay here.' The child was kept isolated for the rest of the day. That evening the teacher drove to the County Seat to report the case to the Health Officer. The doctor immediately drove to the home of the child and took care of the situation. Such incidents could cause tension in the teacher-parent relationship. In the case mentioned, the child had scarlet fever, and was the daughter of the President of the School Board. Fortunately, no other child contracted the disease."

The pupils were to be kept safe. When a three-day snow storm made its appearance, the children were kept in the schoolhouse until help came. The teacher followed a fence for one mile to the nearest farmhouse to get bread and butter for the children. During a storm, a fire had to be kept burning night and day, and the little children had to be comforted away from home.

Mr. Robert L. Conger from Nebraska recalled the many duties of his former teachers:

Photo Courtesy of Nevada Historical Society

Berlin, NV. c. 1902

Teacher at Freedom, Wyoming, Julian Rainey

The teacher, aside from being teacher, was counselor, mediator, nurse, judge, jury, disciplinarian, and jack-of-all-trades. He or she was also the duly elected janitor. This included the housekeeping as well as starting and maintaining the fire in the coal stove. On winter mornings the temperature on the inside was about like the outside. The teacher tried to get there early and get the fire going before the pupils arrived. Any teacher, worth his or her salt, was enterprising enough to incorporate some of the janitor work into their discipline program.

Teachers had to be creative and innovative, for often they had very little with which to work. Pupils sat on crude benches or on the floor and studied in their laps or rough tables. The teacher's desk and chair were either of similar construction, or improvised from the materials at hand. One teacher sat on a nail keg, at a desk made from an old organ.

Everybody realized a school needed a blackboard, and where none was available—presto, a blackboard! In one case, it was a throwboard from a cornhusking wagon, supported by stakes driven into the floor; in another the teacher's breadboard. Lacking boards, the blackboard might be the top of a black trunk nailed to the wall, builder's paper coated with soot and oil, or even the blackened surface of the heating stove.

For chalk the teacher improvised with soft, white rocks, such as soapstone. Some slate pencils were available. Many families brought small slates and pencils with them from the East, and they were also sold in the early

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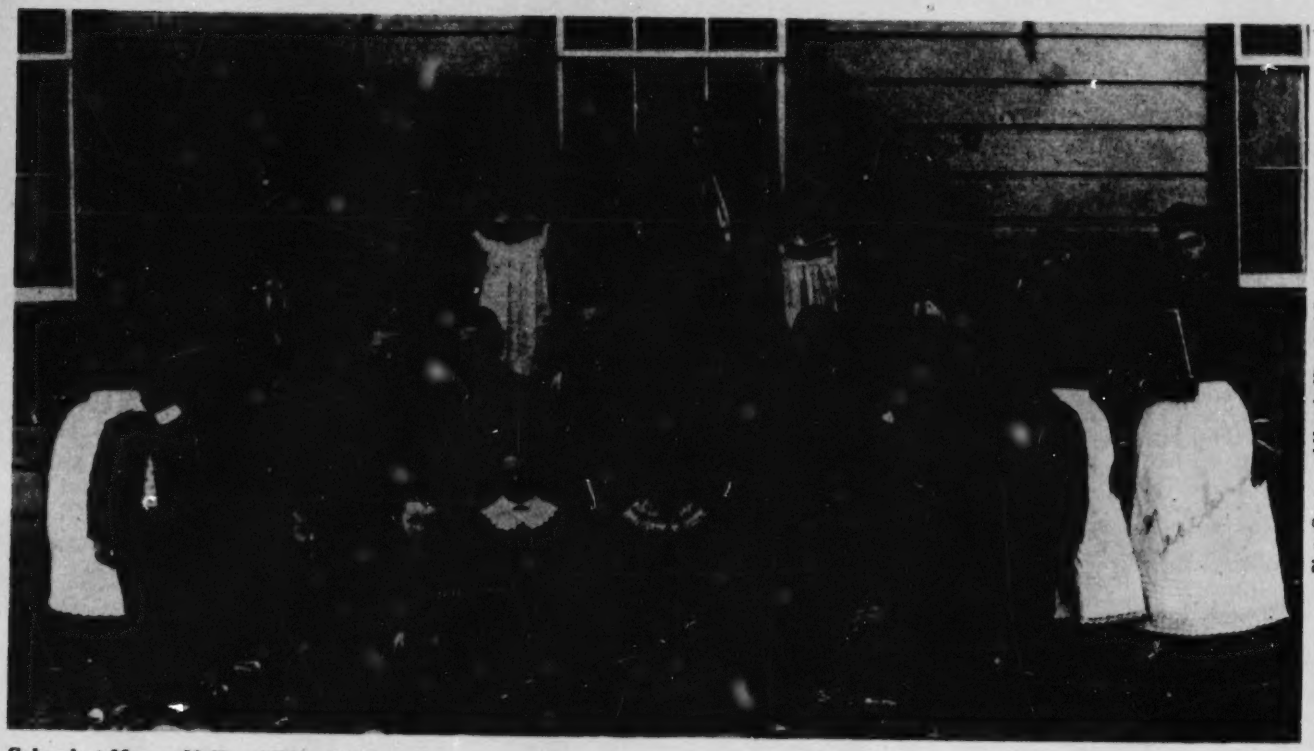

Photo Courtesy of Nevada Historical Society

School at Mason Valley, NV. c. 1889

stores. "The teachers evidently had nerves of steel," said Frances Humphrey of Nevada. "Can you imagine what it would be like to have forty slates in action?"

Lead pencils were a luxury. In 1870 the only one in the vicinity of the Dixon County granary school was constantly borrowed by settlers who kept it carefully wrapped in paper.

Quill pens, made by the teacher or older students, were more common for writing. Ink was variously manufactured from pokeweed berries steeped in water, from stove soot mixed with oil, oil by itself, or from commercial powder to which water was added. The ingenious teacher kept ink from freezing by burying it in the ashes from the stove or in sand.

Studying out loud was common practice—in fact some considered the child who made the most noise the best student. Imagine the pandemonium with studies at all levels in all subjects going on simultaneously! Add to this the fact that they were often taught to sing multiplication tables to the tune of "Yankee Doodle" and it seems a miracle that learning proceeded. But proceed it did.

Local school boards did not help matters much, with their tight-fisted approach to education and the purchase of much needed textbooks and supplies.

Harvey M. Sletten of Ft. Ransom, North Dakota remembers almost not being rehired because, as the farmer with whom he boarded put it, "The board reckons as how yer a fair to middlin' teacher, but you've burned jest too derned much coal this winter."

Sletten reported "a tinge of bitterness creeping through shocked disbelief. My school stood on a hill—utterly naked and exposed to frigid winds."

The farmer admitted that "the younguns have all learned to read tolerably well, but you've burned jest too dern much coal this winter. That buildin' of your'n is as drafty as long-handles underwear with the trap door down. It always takes some more coal, but nothin' like you burned up."

But the farmer liked Harvey, so he did a little investigating in Paradise School District in Eddy County that spring of 1933. Both he and Harvey were happy when the farmer came in one day and announced, "Well yer hired back! Seems as how the feller that hauled coal to yer school got a mite light fingered. Part of each load went into his own coal shed at home."

Despite stingy schoolboards, drafty schools, and a definite lack of materials, "The teacher made the school" is a common reaction to the question: "Did you get a good education?" Learning seems to have taken place in the kind of environment most educators can only theorize about today: one of trust and confidence. The students were eager to learn, and the teachers felt they had something to give the students.

People attached much importance to education and wanted it for their children. So the person to whom they entrusted their children was a cultural leader in the community. There was an interest in everything she did or said or wore, especially if she were a stranger. Those that lived in the community came to become a kind of community fixture. She was important to the whole community, not just to the children in school.

Neil Twitchell, who attended rural schools in Nevada, says,

> By far the most important part of my experience was the relationship between the students and the teachers .... the closeness .... of the whole community. I think that probably would summarize the best part of going to school in Delamar. And I'm sure you'd find that in almost any of the little communities throughout our nation. I'm sure it wasn't materials .... I'm sure it wasn't the tremendously higher caliber of teachers they had because we right now have some tremendous teachers with far better preparation than the teachers who .... some of them just had high school educations or just a year of college and yet they did a tremendous job .... And I think a lot of it had to do with just plain old human relations that took place—the interaction—the feelings—and the willingness.

* * *

Material from this section not otherwise cited came from staff members Charles Johnson, Denver, Colorado; Philip Brown, Brookings, South Dakota; Caroline Hatton, Edgemont, South Dakota; Dr. Warren Henke, Bismarck, North Dakota; Jim Dertien, Bellevue, Nebraska; Dr. Ernest Grundy, Kearney, Nebraska; Milton Riske, Cheyenne, Wyoming; Robert Barthel, Powell, Wyoming; Jessie Embry, Provo, Utah; Nancy Cummings, Las Vegas, Nevada; Dorothy Ritenour, Las Vegas, Nevada.

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THE BLIZZARD OF 1888

All went well and many students attended and received their elementary education. Sadness struck in the winter of 1888, when a severe blizzard raged on the prairies.

The almost treeless prairie was covered with a thick blanket of loose snow. Even on that fatal morning, myriads of snow flakes were gently falling. The morning dawned, but the sun, as though not willing to look on that fatal morning, was hid behind a dark wall of clouds.

The morning chores were hurriedly done and preparations were made to be off to school. The teacher (James P. Colton) who boarded at the Albrecht home said when he left for school that morning: "I hope you boys will not be absent." Mother all morning instinctively felt depressed, and wished that the boys stay home. The father saw nothing unusual in the weather conditions and thought it well for the boys to go.

The younger child, Peter J. Albrecht, consented to stay at home, although the thought that he was left behind in his school by his classmates made him somewhat sad. At about eleven o'clock, the heavens became a little clearer, but he sat longingly by the window looking toward the schoolhouse. Mother, who seemingly read his thoughts said: "My child, I really wish your brother was here with you. I feel something in my heart. I don't know what it is." Father was busy outside.

Suddenly the house was filled with darkness and the whizzing sound of myriads of snowflakes that were dancing through the air to the music of the great northwest wind almost deafening. Peter rushed to the door, but saw nothing but a solid wall of moving snow which blinded the eyes. Mother was excited. After some time, father rushed in and after regaining his breath said, "The like has not yet been experienced." The storm was increasing and the mercury was falling. Mother sobbed: "Oh, where is my child?" Evening came and with passing twilight, the storm increased.

After a restless night the morning dawned. Though the fury of the storm was somewhat gone, it was still drifting and very unpleasant. Quite early, the father took the dinner pail and hurried off to the schoolhouse. As he opened the door, he saw the teacher standing all alone. After a few moments, the father asked: "Where is John?" The teacher replied that yesterday they tried to go to a close neighbor for the night and five of the pupils got separated from the other pupils, and were not heard from since, among them was John.

Soon the neighborhood was aroused and a hunt for the unfortunate was begun. But on account of the fierce wind and drifting snow, not much was done. Next day which was still very cold and rough, the hunt was continued. Soon traces of their tracks were found, but they soon were lost in the snow drifts. Here and there it was plainly seen that five were walking side by side, but again the tracks of only three were seen. No doubt the two small boys were carried by the larger ones.

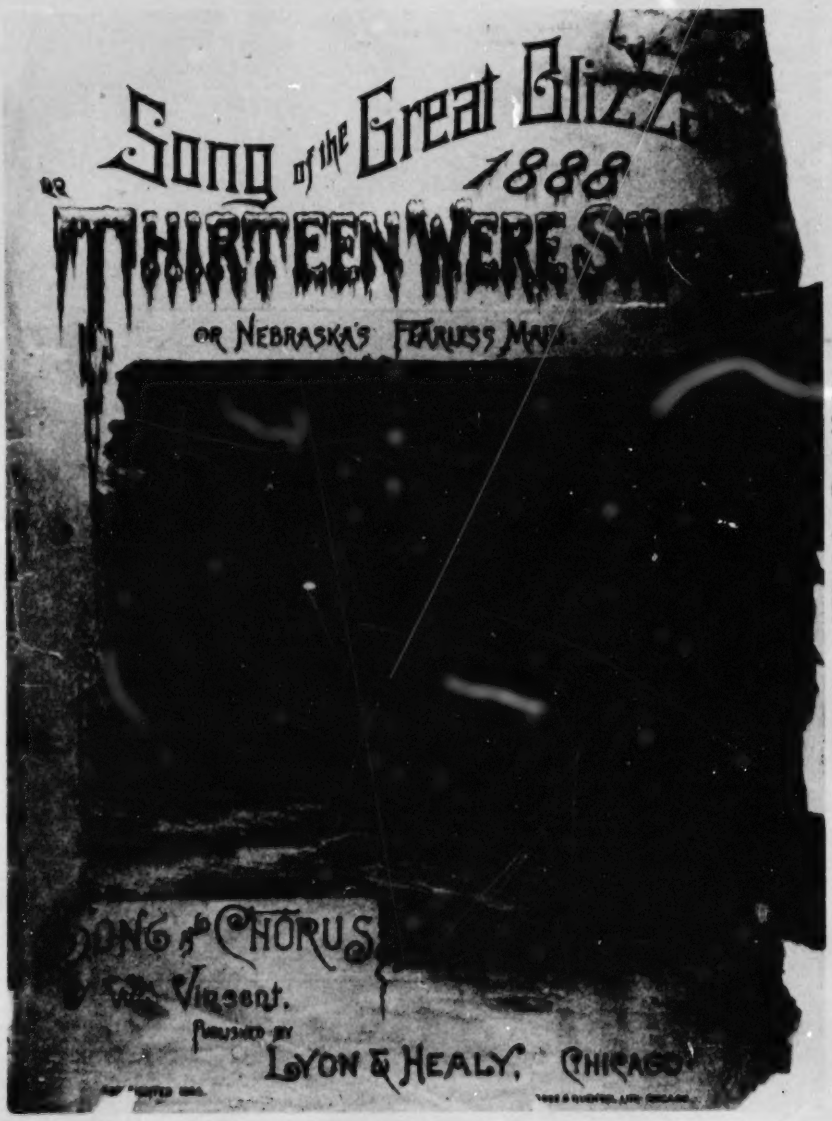

Photo Courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society

The third day, a clear Sunday, people went to church in hopes of finding traces of the lost ones. Mr. Goertz, who lived about five miles south of Marion, said that his boys found on the meadow five children frozen, but they knew not to whom they belonged. Soon the fathers of the unfortunate ones were on the way to the meadow. When they got there, they were horror stricken, hardly able to move, for they saw their own children frozen like cattle of the field. One father in agony of his soul cried out: "Oh, God, is it mine or thine fault that I find my three boys frozen like the beasts of the field?"

Soon they were laid side by side into one grave in the Salem-Zion Cemetry to rest in peace.

BLIZZARD OF 1888 from: *Turner County South Dakota Pioneer History* by P.J. Albrecht.

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Photo Courtesy of South Dakota State Historical Society

Cheyenne River School, SD

Photo Courtesy of Greeley Municipal Museums

Wyatt School, CO. 1934

Photo Courtesy of Greeley Municipal Museums

Unknown Colorado School

COUNTRY SCHOOLS AND AMERICANIZATION

Depressed and heart-sore Peder had dropped into the seat. He felt utterly sick and weary of everything. All the eyes back of him pricked his neck like pins. Directly in front of him hung the blackboard; at the top of it was written in a beautiful hand, 'This is an American school; in work and play alike we speak English only!' He read the commandment twice; a feeling of shame came over him and he slunk even lower in his seat.

From *Peder Victorious*
by O. E. Rolvaag

During the nineteenth and twentieth century, many immigrants came to the United States in search of freedom and opportunity. Many hoped to earn a fortune and then return to the homeland. Others planned to stay and start a new life. Nearly all found the new country difficult to adapt to; the dream of the melting pot where all nationalities blended into one was quite often a myth, especially for those who came from Southern Europe, Asia, Africa, Mexico, and South America. These groups, along with the American Indians, were frequently discriminated against because they were different than the Northern Europeans.

Utah's immigration pattern was much like the rest of the United States. The early Mormons who came to Utah were either from eastern United States or recent converts from England and Northern Europe. Although these early members of the LDS Church initially were considered outside the American mainstream, once the Americanization of Utah took place, the Mormons became the vanguard of the American dream. They accepted the nationalist code which swept the United States after the 1800's that new foreigners should adapt themselves to America's lifestyle.

One way that the new immigrants could change their lifestyle and become Americanized was to attend school. The educational system in the United States helped in the process of Americanization by giving "instruction....in English and in U.S. history, government, and culture." The schools also attempted to make the immigrants conform to American characteristics."

Although most schools offered instruction for children in grades first through eighth, there were variations on the theme as immigrant parents came to learn the language. In the winter when farm work had slackened off, laborers would come, hat in hand, to stand at the back of the room and listen to English. Children accepted these older pupils as they accepted most everything else. For most newcomers, the schools were valuable language centers. Once the children could speak English they took their new language skills home and taught their younger brothers and sisters and their parents. One Slav woman explained the value of school in helping the whole family learn the new language:

> English I pick up pretty quick, you know, American language, and I could count to hundred dollars, but little by little I could speak it pretty good. It was harder if you don't have kids, but if you have kids you could pick it up from them, too."

Learning English was the first step in the Americanization process. Many immigrants' parents were willing to let their children take the step, but they did not want them to lose the native tongue. Stella Pappa remembered that her teacher in Hiawatha, Utah, got after her and her friends for speaking Greek. When the teacher questioned the mother, she told her that it was the teacher's responsibility to teach English. Margaret Williams Torkelson, a teacher in a two-room school in "Little Germany" in Logan, Utah, explained how this attitude created problems:

> There was a real problem with the parents who wanted their children to learn to read in English but to speak only German in the home. They thought the discipline was too lax—not strict like it was in the old country.

Sometimes the cases were so difficult that students who could not pass the English IQ test were considered mentally retarded and held back in school. Still, immigrant parents wanted their children to preserve part of their language, heritage, and culture. The Greeks, the Japanese, and the Serbians set up their own schools for their children.

Nebraska immigrants also had difficulties. Carl H. Peterson, born in 1868, interviewed for a WPA project remembers:

> ...father used to come to school quite often and tell me to go and get the cattle off the neighbor's land. Sometimes father would come at 11:00 a.m. and by the time I would get the cows home it would be noon and he would tell me, well it's dinner time, now you might as well herd the cows this afternoon, then you can go to school again tomorrow. So it went and the school was a side issue it seemed. The reason the children would be called on to get the cows off the neighbor's land was this: many times if the parents would go after cattle that were on the neighbor's places, they didn't want to get into an argument with the neighbors, so they would send the children and nothing was said. In all, I went to school three winters and finished the third grade.

Various forces pushed and pulled immigrants from their native homeland to the northern plains. Whatever their reasons—the desire for a new home in a new country, the promise of wealth, dissatisfaction with conditions in the old country, or personal considerations—the immigrants moved into North Dakota rapidly and in astonishing numbers.

In 1890, one year after statehood, the foreign born comprised 43 percent of the state's 191,000 people. The largest immigrant groups at that time were the Norwegians with 25,700 people, 23,000 Canadians, 9,000 Germans, 8,000 from England and Ireland, and 4,100 from Russia.

By 1910 the foreign born and their children made up 71 percent of the population, of which the largest group were the Norwegians with 125,000, closely followed by Germans with 117,000, about half of whom were Germans from Russia. At the end of the decade, during which settlement of the state was completed, the immigrants and their children numbered 432,000 or 67 percent of the population. By this time, 1920, the Germans from Germany and Russia were the most numerous ethnic group.

If the areas that various nationalities settled in North Dakota were coded on a map, the final product would resemble a mosaic, but the mosaic would require subtle shading and detail. Swedes, Finns, a small colony of Syrians (who erected near Ross the first Moslem mosque in the United States), Swiss, Estonians, English, and others scattered themselves throughout the state.

The school was the institution that played the major role, directly or indirectly, in imparting American culture to immigrants in North Dakota. In the company of fellow nationals, the immigrant observed the customs of the old country and spoke his native tongue at social gatherings and in church. Business and legal transactions required an interpreter if one's knowledge of the English language was insufficient. The immigrants could cling to their traditions and language, but their children were required to attend school. The school placed the children in contact with other nationalities and with a teacher who instructed them in the English language and attempted to foster patriotism. As the children adopted American manners, their parents gradually abandoned their ancestral loyalties. Where the child went, the adult followed.

Teachers frequently found the Icelandic customs disturbing. Icelandic women retained their original family name after mar-

riage, a practice some thought indecent. The Icelanders' patronymic system, meaning that a brother and sister had different surnames, annoyed some teachers who did not appreciate their ethnic traditions. Icelandic customs celebrating Ash Wednesday included one day similar to Halloween when children would collect sweets from adults. On Ash Wednesday it was customary to play practical jokes, the favorite being to pin a small bag of ashes to the back of a man's coat or trousers, the victim being unaware of his adornment. Once done to a dignified teacher in a predominantly Icelandic school, the pupils were severely punished for a prank that, in their culture, was acceptable humor.

Conscientious country school teachers struggled to overcome handicaps to teach English to the immigrant children. When the teacher could not speak the native tongue of the young pupils, an older student would sometimes serve as an interpreter. Still, the lack of a common language between teacher and pupil was the major problem retarding the child's educational progress. As one former student recalls in Thorstina Walters' book, **Modern Sagas: The Story of Icelanders in North America:**

> In those pioneer days...our trouble was that we did not understand the language of the textbooks. Frequently, when we asked the teacher to explain the meaning of words to us, he referred us to the dictionary and there we found ourselves entangled in a maze of words that had no meaning to us.

Memorization and frequent repetition were the methods commonly used to teach English. In Frances Hitz's childhood home, only Czech was spoken. The little English she knew upon starting school came from her older sisters and brothers who attended school before her and occasionally used an English word. Her first grade teacher, who had come from a Norwegian immigrant family, knew no Czech at all. "How I managed to learn to read, write, and think in English that first year," she wrote, "I do not know. I memorized the **Rose Primer** until I knew each page by heart, and to this day I can close my eyes and see each page, the word or words, and pictures that were above the words."

Some accommodating teachers held special evening sessions for adults who wished to learn to speak and read English. Delrey Webster instructed a 40-year-old Swede in English during recess and often held spelling bees in the evening for adults who wished to sharpen their language skills.

Motives of adult students were sometimes more than purely academic. Some of the young male homesteaders who attended school hoped to improve their social life as well as their English by dating the teacher. A number were successful on both counts. Many so-called "school marms" became "farm wives," making marriage a prolific source of Americanization.

Gladys Webster asserts that 26 different nationalities or combinations thereof attended school with her in Dunn County. She believes the children were motivated to learn English so that they could communicate with each other.

But problems of language and learning were minor compared with the problems of forced conformity to American traditions. One of the misnomers that developed in the twentieth century was that the immigrants were inferior and that America was for "Americans"—those people who were already in this country.

Many misunderstandings resulted and many school children who may have become great successes were forever soured on school

Photo Courtesy of Utah State Historical Society

Unknown school, thought to be in Wyoming

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Photo Courtesy of State Historical Society of North Dakota

Fort Yates, N.D. 1875

because of early confrontations with their teacher. And those who did adopt American customs readily and spoke English fluently often came to disrespect their parents and the ways of "the old country."

But if Americanization proved difficult for the millions of Europeans who swarmed into America after the Civil War, it was even more difficult for the native American Indians. They were truly caught between two cultures.

In South Dakota, a 1913 law required that Indian children be included in the census which put them under the compulsory attendance law. But in 1915, this law was repealed, serving to excuse Indian children from compulsory attendance in white schools. Thus Indian parents living off the reservation did not have to send their children to school, and teachers, school board members, and administrator, could discourage Indian children from coming to school and not be breaking any laws.

As the Indians sold their land on the reservation to white ranchers, some public school districts were established there. They had very meager tax support, but a few small one-room schools were started, and Indian children living in the vicinity sometimes attended.

Most Indian children of western South Dakota started school speaking only Lakota. Harold Shunk said that when he started teaching in 1936 at Cherry Creek day school, Cheyenne River reservation, only two children of the forty or fifty in that community spoke English. He said he taught his first graders English and reading by using pictures of the things they knew, printing the name of the thing under the picture and teaching them to read those words. He used things they understood: deer, chipmunk, skunk, crow, raccoon, tree, at first and then led them to other words. To his great surprise it worked and they learned. Lakota children had no understandings or experiences which helped them in their lessons. The contents of the textbooks too often were alien and unrelated to anything in their lives.

Indian students were often late for school because they had been kept up the night before doing tribal dances. So a school supervisor insisted that the students dance at school. Reluctantly the teacher agreed.

One morning the teacher had them push the desks back and dance Indian. The next day three Indian mothers came to see him, and he told them why he had let the children dance. One mother said she would like to talk with the lady [supervisor] the next time she came to visit school. When the supervisor came on her next visit, the teacher told her the Indian mother wanted to see her and he pointed out her house. There she was told in quite definite terms that Indian children in that community were to go to school to learn from books and she would please leave the dancing up to the parents.

There were twenty-one day schools on the Pine Ridge reservation. Officially they were designated by number, but among the local people some of them were called by names like Red Shirt Table day school, Wakpamini day school, Wounded Knee, Oglalla, Lone Man, Porcupine, Wamblee, Potato Creek, and Slim Buttes. On the Cheyenne River reservation there were ten one-room schools: Cherry Creek, Red Stafford, Bridger, Iron Lightning, Thunder Butte, Four Bear, Green Grass, Bear Creek, Moreau River, and White Horse. On Rosebud there were nine day schools: Oakcreek, He Dog, Horse Creek, Norris, Little Crow, Corn Creek, Spring Creek, Milks Camp, and Soldier Creek.

In Utah in 1928 the Indian Department asked that the San Juan School District make arrangements for Indian children to attend the Blanding, Utah, schools. Plans were made for the children to go to school and the Bayles' home was purchased as a dormitory. Due to health problems and a division of the teachers on whether the Indians should attend the schools, the matter was reconsidered in 1935 and again in 1941 when the decision was made that no Indian pupils would attend the Blanding schools.

Since the Indian children could not attend the Blanding schools, several other plans were tried. The Episcopal Church established St. Christopher's Mission in Bluff which set up a school. They tried to maintain two teachers because they had pupils from age one to eighty-five years. Helen Sturgis, the principal of the school, said in 1952 that although the

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Navajo learned slowly, they loved the opportunity. All the students were beginners in English. The Navajos loved to learn geography and United States history.

> They were very eager for school. One little sheepholder would come down at night. He would take the sheep down to the water and look around to see if the parents were looking and then run into the school, grab his pencil, and work feverishly for a few minutes. Usually the parents came after him.

Roxie Copenhaver, the Deputy Superintendent of Schools for Nevada during World War II, had a strong response to the question, Were there any problems with discrimination in southern Nevada then? Her answer: "At that time you never heard of it, didn't know what it was. I've always thought of the little school at Pahrump where I had to give a graduation talk. I was telling about how this little school had all nationalities. We had Mexicans; We had Indians; We had Chinese ....had all these nationalities—this was certainly democracy working."

Although in many areas discrimination did exist, and cultural assimilation was a painful, if not divisive, process, wherever the school and whatever its name, the country school was a community school. Even before churches were built, a school would be hastily assembled to meet the needs of district children. Once the building was erected and classes had begun, the one-room school became a source of community pride.

Children worked on the farms, but they grew up in school, and eighth-grade commencement became for many the apogee of their education. It was a solemn day with starched shirts and clean petticoats. A stirring Pledge of Allegiance, loud and robust, began the ceremonies, followed by patriotic songs like "My Country 'Tis of Thee," "America the Beautiful," and the national anthem. First-generation Italian miners, Slovak farmers, and German-Russian workers stared in pride at their children who had learned the language and their lessons well.

Eighth-grade commencement became an important rite of passage for those who would leave their small community to attend a union high school. For others, commencement meant the end of an education and the beginning of full-fledged duties of manhood or womanhood.

Hardbitten ranchers who had pinched a silver dollar until the eagle screamed, who had shown no emotion when the bank had threatened to foreclose, lightning had killed the prize bull, or hail had destroyed the wheat drop in a single storm, these men cried now, hats in their hands. Not much. Just a little tear across those dusty, wind-burned cheeks. For their children had done something that they themselves could never do. Their children had graduated from the eighth grade and had earned their place among other Americans. Never more would the parents worry about their place in society. Their children would succeed. The farm would be handed down or the boys would become men and work their way up and out of the mine.

The country superintendent called each name and handed the pupil a diploma with the name of the school district, the place, the date, and the reason for such an auspicious occasion. Momma placed her head in her hands and wept softly until father, his arm on her shoulder, urged her to look up at her proud son or daughter with diploma in hand. The graduate broke into a grin and mother burst into tears.

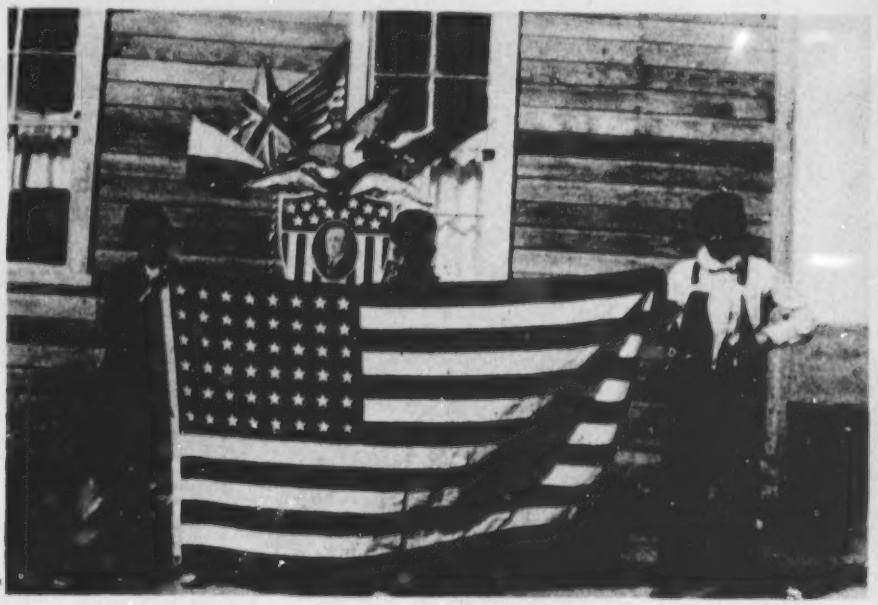

Photo Courtesy of Lucy Lebsack Nunn

Victor School, fall of 1918, Weld County, CO. The small flags represented the Allies in World War I. Throughout country schools, WWI and subsequent intense patriotism did much to force Americanization of immigrants.

* * *

Material in this section not otherwise identified came from staff members, Mary and Robert Carlson, Glenburn, North Dakota; Jessie Embry, Provo, Utah; Caroline Hatton, Edgemont, South Dakota; Jim Dertien, Bellevue, Nebraska; Dr. Ernest Grundy, Kearney, Nebraska; Nancy Cummings and Dorothy Ritenour, Las Vegas, Nevada; and Andrew Gulliford.

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Country schools were an important institution in the growth and development of North Dakota. From the earliest days of settlement, the small white frame schoolhouse stood as a lonely ship on a sea of prairie grass. The country school symbolized both continuity and change for all engaged in the process of settlement. For the seasoned older Americans used to moving further west every few years, the school stood for continuity. It symbolized the continual reestablishment of a basic pattern of American civilization from the East Coast through the old Northwest and now onto the Great Plains. For the newly arrived Norwegian or German-Russian, the school stood for change. It also epitomized, however, a new civilization and the inevitable process of Americanization.
Dan Rylance

COUNTRY SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITY CENTERS

We gave programs at different times of the year. The whole valley came. All the parents and aunts and grandparents and all. After the program we pushed all the desks to one side and had a little dance. The people looked forward to that. We had box socials, too, and everybody fixed their box. There was a oneness among the people. School was a common goal and everyone wanted to see how their child participated when he or she had a part in the play, got all dressed up, and went out there and performed.

The country school was the heart of the community. People liked to go there and visit friends from up and down the valley.

Mrs. Margaret Darien,
Basalt, Colorado

Most communities used the schoolhouse for all the local activities. The schoolhouse was the largest building available, even though few were over 20 by 30 feet. It was also a symbol of culture in a frontier community where there were few such symbols. And since there was a feeling that the schoolhouse belonged to all the people, everyone felt welcome there.

In the history of Mountain View School in Wyoming, Margaret Dempster comments on the community participation in school programs:

> There were many gatherings at the schoolhouse during the years. At Christmas and at the end of the year there were programs, parties, and dinners. The favorite gatherings were dances. Mrs. Bates played the organ or piano, Mrs. Boermer played a mouth harp, and Mrs. Stall sang and kept time for dancing. They called this group the Pumpkin Center Orchestra. Sometimes Pete and Byron Stall had to work the bellows by hand to keep the music going on the organ. Sometimes the Borners moved their piano over on a sled for extra music.

That the community gatherings were well attended speak to their value in an isolated community. The enthusiasm which people brought to the program was evidenced often by the damage done to the building. Pete King remembers the gasoline lanterns going out during a dance because the dust raised by the enthusiastic dancers clogged the air vents in the lanterns. The dancers were forced to take breaks to allow the dust to settle and the lanterns to flare up brightly again.

The weekly dances at the schoolhouse were attended by everyone. Young parents brought their children and bedded them down on the benches. Older folks arrived to share their knowledge of the old home dancing and younger people came to try out the new round dances. Lillian Grace Chadwick Warburton of Utah remembers a dance they had in Etna, Box Elder County, when she was teaching there in 1918:

> When I was teaching at this Etna School, they decided they would have a real dance, so we pushed back all the desks, all the benches against the wall to make as many seats as we could for anybody who came. (We) erased anything we had on the board such as phonics....and put, "Come one, come all, come short, come tall, come jump the tracks in Etna Hall." They got an accordion player. He came. I can still hear those tunes that he played. He played the polka and the Virginia reels and all the square dances you could think of....Those boards just hopped along with the rest of us. It was really lively. There wasn't room for everybody to get on the floor at once. We had a really good time.

Every community had one citizen who could "call" square dances, usually an older man who had danced in his youth and took up calling as he got older. No pay was involved for either the musicians or the caller. Lunch was served at midnight. No charge for that either.

Heavy drinking was no problem, even though the men might step out for a little nip. The dancing was the main thing and everyone participated, sometimes all night long. If young people heard of the dance from fifteen or twenty miles away they might come on horseback. After the dance they would ride home, getting there well after sun-up. Cold weather was no deterrent, either. They could go by team and wagon but that was slower. Sometimes they traveled by teams, with hot rocks or hot "sad irons" at their feet under buffalo robes for warmth.

School buildings preceded churches in many communities, and there are a number of reports of buildings used for prayer meetings and church services, usually non-denominational. Some of the services were conducted by itinerant preachers, a latter day circuit rider.

While there are no records of funeral services held in a rural school, Ingleside School in the Iron Mountain area of Laramie County, Wyoming, boasted of a marriage ceremony when Gunmar Andersen, a hotel commisary clerk, married Lil, the cook. A Baptist minister came from Cheyenne to perform the ceremony as reported in the Wyoming Educator.

In Boulder, Wyoming, while no funeral was held, an autopsy was performed in the school. When a town citizen, Ben Walker, was murdered by Jack Walters, the body was laid out on the floor and a decision made on the cause of death. Students had to set several desks over the blood-stained floor.

Mary Riley of Cody remembers attending the Moore Hill School in Crook County.

> Across the road from the schoolhouse was Moore Hill Cemetery. On several occasions when an internment took place, school was dismissed and the students attended the 'burying.' We mingled with the family and friends of the deceased and wept, even though we had not been acquainted with the dead person.

Besides being used for weddings, church services, autopsies, and funerals, "...the schoolhouse was always the 'Polling Place' on election day, and almost any sort of business meeting or anything that affected or was of general interest to the community was discussed there. In a range country such as ours," says Bill May from Steamboat Springs, Colorado, "important 'range meetings' were often held at the schoolhouse. As often as not the schoolmaster was expected to officiate or be chariman at such meetings, as he was usually considered the best qualified one present to properly conduct a meeting."

In Utah, Lenora Hall La Feure writing in **The Boulder Country and Its People** states:

> William Alvery of Escalante rode his horse across to Boulder over the Death Hollow trail, a distance of about fifteen miles. William Alvery sat at the teacher's desk with the little tin ballot box he had brought placed right there in front. He was authorized to register every person of voting age. Everyone in the community came and cast a vote. By two o'clock that afternoon the election was over and William Alvery went back to Escalante with the votes locked in the ballot box to be counted in Escalante. A few days passed before the settlers knew for sure Republican William McKinley was elected President of the United States, though most of the Boulder people, loyal Democrats, probably voted for William Jennings Bryan.

The schoolhouses were also used for community fund raising activities or national support activities. During World War I, the schools in Uinta County, Utah, sponsored a junior Red Cross Program and collected a Christmas fund

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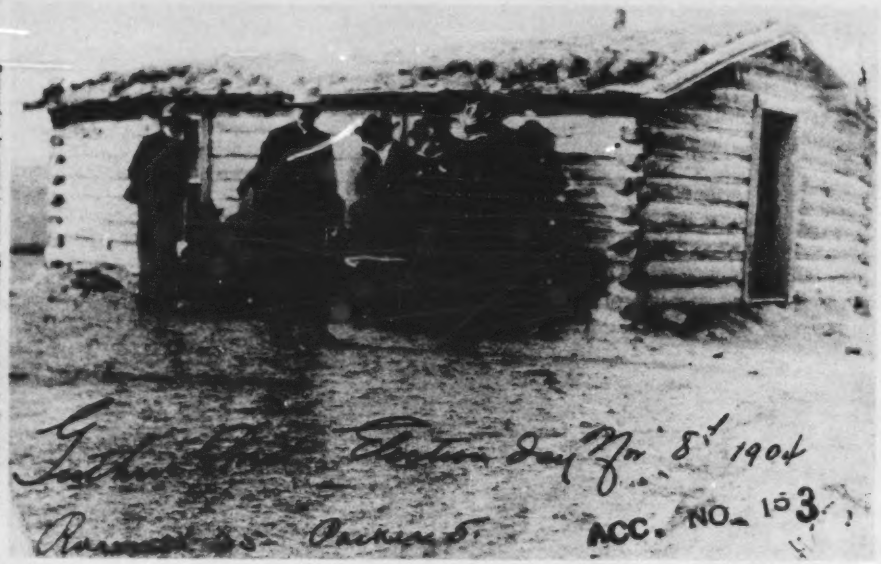

Photo Courtesy of American Heritage Center, Univ. of Wyoming

Above and below: Election of 1904 at a Converse City Schoolhouse, Wyoming.

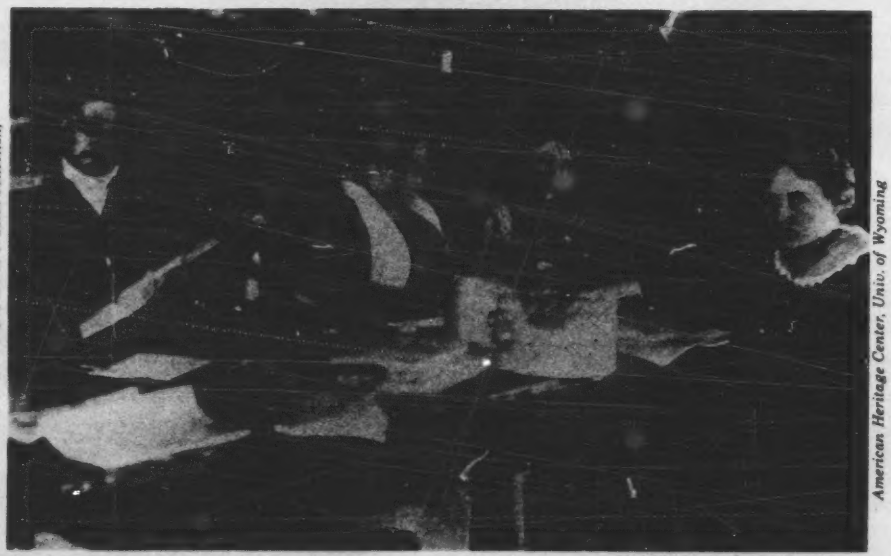

Photo Courtesy of Leslie C. John Collection.

American Heritage Center, Univ. of Wyoming

Election at Rock River, Wyoming. c. 1916

for the soldiers and sailors. At the schools in east San Juan County the local people held dances and raffles to raise money to buy savings bonds.

Once in awhile a wedding dance was held at the schoolhouse. Vena Schick said, "Our wedding dance was held at the Ayres Schoolhouse. Fred had to furnish the music and he never got a dance with his bride all night." Fred played the violin.

Spelling bees, arithmetic contests and debates were held in the schools. "The Rock Springs Miner" newspaper is quoted in the excellent book, **Cowbelles Ring Schoolbells**, written and published by the Albany County, Wyoming, Cow-Belles Club, and tells of an untimely end to one spelling bee when a cowboy rode into the schoolhouse on his horse. On November 3, 1933, a debate in a rural Uinta County, Utah discussed the topic: "Is a load of seed potatoes or a load of women most needed in the community?"

Spelling bees were a part of the winter entertainment in the days when there was no radio, no television, and no way to get to town. This was adult recreation and if the children came, they were strictly in the audience unless some older one was an extra good speller who could hold his own with the competition. The teacher pronounced the words, and they got tougher and tougher as the evening progressed.

On January 1, 1881, when Rapid City, South Dakota, was just a village, an article appeared in the **Black Hills Journal** that challenged the people of the town:

> Believing that an entertaining as well as amusing evening might be spent by the people of our town in an orthographical contest, I. S. Pitts Wells, the schoolmaster hereby in behalf of the Rapid City school, challenges the people of this town or as many as wish to participate to meet said school in a spelling match....

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Photo Courtesy of Rifle Creek Museum, Rifle, CO.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT AND THE BLUE GOOSE SCHOOL

Western Colorado was a favorite hunting ground of President Theodore Roosevelt around the turn of the century. He was apparently fond of going after bear, mountain lion, elk, and deer in the Rifle and Meeker areas. In fact, two months after taking office as President, Teddy was hunting on Mamm Creek!

The Reverend Horace Mann, pastor of the Christian Church in Rifle, Colorado, had become acquainted with Roosevelt while a young minister in New York State. It turned out that Mann took up his profession in an area frequented by Roosevelt during his widely publicized hunting excursions. Mann would accompany the President on hunting trips, and being the most professional photographer the area could muster, he often photographed Roosevelt and other members of the hunting parties.

It was during one of these trips—while hunting mountain lion—that Mann invited Roosevelt to attend one of his rural church services and to address the local people on April 30, 1905.

The reverend's service was held at what was known as The Blue School or Blue Hen School or, as it was later known, The Blue Goose School. The Blue School was located on Divide Creek in Western Garfield County, about six miles below the Roosevelt camp.

The service was held around noon time, outside the school building, with Roosevelt delivering a short talk, followed by a sermon by Mann. Some 200-300 people, mostly farmers and their families from the surrounding rural community, attended.

According to Golda Lytle of Rifle, there was an open air "potluck" lunch held following the service. She recalls folks spreading their meals out on the ground around the tiny schoolhouse built in the late 1880's and under nearby trees.

"I would judge that a good share of the community turned out," said Lytle. "Of course, it was a pretty small community back then."

Lytle said she accompanied her parents and brother and sister to the event on a lumber wagon pulled by a team of horses. She said the family came from Rifle, some 15 miles away. That was about half a day's ride, according to Lytle.

"I remember it was quite an honor to get a President in our community," Lytle recalls. "As I'm sure it would be today."

The President himself wrote of the service in his book, **Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter**:

> One Sunday we rode down some six miles from camp to a little blue school-house and attended service. The preacher was in the habit of riding over every alternate Sunday from Rifle, a little town twenty or twenty-five miles away; and the ranchmen with their wives and children, some on horseback, some in wagons, had gathered from thirty miles round to attend the service. The crowd was so large that the exercises had to take place in the open air, and it was pleasant to look at the strong frames and rugged, weather-beaten faces of the men; while as for the women, one respected them even more than the men.
>
> . . . . .

Research by staff member Pat O'Neill, Parachute, Colorado

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On January 8, 1881, **The Journal** stated:

> The result of the spelling bee was Veni, Vidi but we didn't Vici worth a cent! In other words the Rapid City school got away with the town....The ease, grace, and rapidity with which the school thinned the ranks arrayed in opposition was beautiful and wonderful to behold .... Miss Tressler stumbled on the word, 'mortise' and victory was declared for the school....McGuffey's spelling book was used.

Sometimes school programs were put on to raise money to buy things for the school; encyclopedias, a crockery water container, playground equipment, a clock. After the program there would be a box social or a pie social. Everyone in the community took part. Verda Arnold described South Dakota box socials:

> Oh what thrilling fun! All women and girls, even little preschoolers, decorated boxes or baskets with crepe paper. Some turned out creations of real artistic beauty. But the food! Packed in those boxes on the big night was enough food for six people and only two were supposed to eat it. Now the fun(?) came when a certain young man or boy was known to be courting—or just showing interest in—a special girl. The men and boys were not supposed to know to whom any one box belonged. But of course, there were ways and ways of finding out. Especially when the young lady was willing. The fun part came when a young man (sometimes not so young) began to bid. The rest of the males took great delight in bidding against him to run the price as high as they thought he could afford and would go. More than once a box sold for $25 or $30.

The last big affair of the school year was the school picnic. Everyone came whether they had children in school or not. It was a potluck affair with lots of food and usually a ball game in the afternoon and more coffee and food late in the afternoon before everyone went home. There was talking and visiting and games for the little children. Sometimes it was held at school but generally it was held where there were some trees, along a creek somewhere. It came to be a tradition to go back to the same place year after year. The only thing that would cancel it would be rain, for then the gumbo would be so sticky that wagon wheels couldn't turn.

Margaret Hoglund Coe reminisced about her experience at the Upper Sage Creek School in Wyoming:

> ...The ones that are still around think of the Church services held in the old school house; the school programs; the spelldowns with Lower Sage Creek School and Mountain View School; and the picnics,where almost all came back smelling of wild onions and garlic, and a few bunches of wild flowers, a mouse or two to drop in someone's pocket, a smile and a feeling of happiness at being alive on such a beautiful day.

Photo Courtesy of Colorado Fuel and Iron Corp., Pueblo Library District

Unknown Company School 1926

The schools, especially the student activities, provided the cement to keep a community together. People were afraid that once the school was closed it would destroy community life. In some areas the parents and students fought consolidation for that reason. Some parents refused to send their children to the larger schools until they were forced to by the school boards. Many people grew up with the schoolhouse the center of their lives. Everything important took place there. As children they attended school, as young people it was the place for social events, as married folks it was a place for cultural activities, church and Sunday school, and the best school they could afford for their children.

Most communities in the West and Midwest were isolated from the world around them. The more isolated the community, the more important the schoolhouse. Esma Lewis taught school in Garfield County, Colorado, for sixty years. She reminisces:

> I taught through the Depression, and we had to help each other. That is one of the things we have lost, because during the Depression we did help each other all the time. Anybody that I ever did anything for did much more for me in many ways. I have always said that I cast my bread upon the waters and it came back cake. Forty years later a man came to do a day's job for me and when he was finished he said with a twinkle in his eye, 'No, I won't take money from you. I remember what you did for us once.'
>
> 'Oh,' I said. 'That was forty years ago and you've restored my faith in human nature, but you have to take this money for the work you did.' I wonder if we'd do that again if we had a Depression?

It was the Christmas programs more than any other event that brought people together. Edmund Fleming recalls Christmas at his Nevada school:

> The teacher started on the Christmas event probably early in November. I don't know how much teaching went on between then and Christmas but it was a type of education. You were expected to put on a play and each kid was supposed to get up there. No matter how inept he was, each kid was supposed to perform. The community would chip in and buy Christmas presents for each of the children.

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Photo Courtesy of Pueblo Regional Library

Fowler, Colorado area. c. 1918

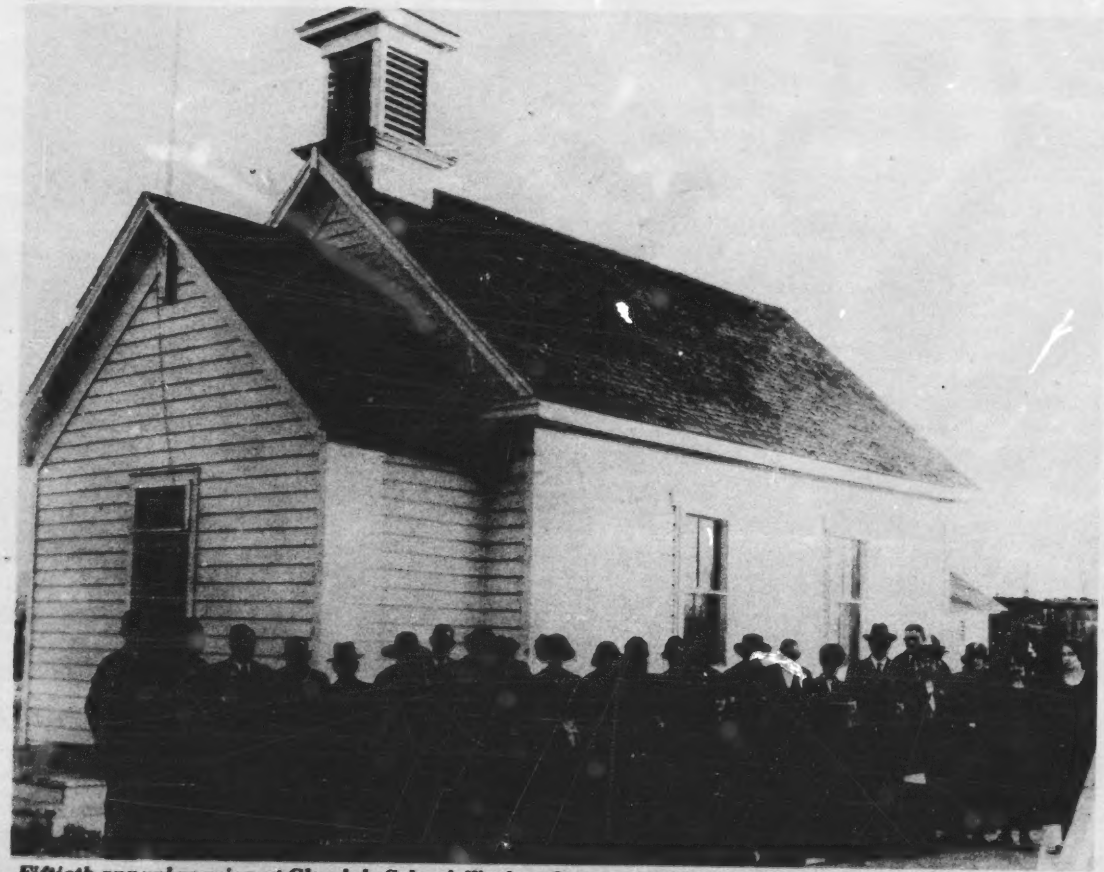

Photo Courtesy of Nevada Historical Society

Fiftieth annual reunion at Glendale School, Washou County, NEV. School was later moved to Reno.

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Photo Courtesy of Nevada Historical Society

Gathering at the site of a new school in Churchill County, Nev., 1915.

Each of the children would get a tremendous Christmas stocking. They would spend perhaps five dollars for each child which at that time was the equivalent of about forty dollars nowadays. So everybody in the community looked forward to the Christmas party or pageant. And everybody had a good time.

At least 150 to 200 people would come to the party, which constituted the entire population of the town. There were very few other activities available, says Mr. Fleming. "There was the saloon, and that was it."

Usually the preparation for the Christmas program began the week after Thanksgiving. Everybody had a part, not only the children, but adults as well. The same people performed the same part annually in the acting out of the Christmas story. Young men played the shepherds and the Wise Men for four or five years or as long as they stayed in the community. Besides gifts, there were oranges, candy, and nuts for the children. There was a tree, of course. If they had candles on it, they were lit for just a moment or two. A man with a pail of water sat close by in case of fire. After the program, coffee and sandwiches, cakes and pies brought by the families were served.

Photo Courtesy of American Heritage Center, Univ. of Wyoming

Church & Sunday School at the School House at Glendo, Wyoming

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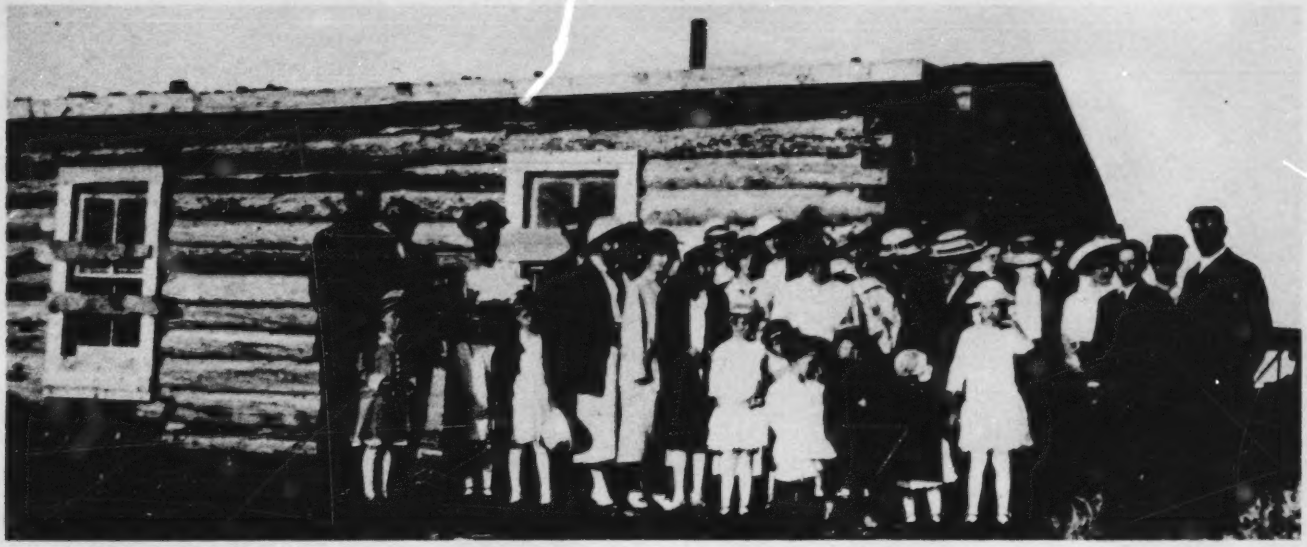

Photo Courtesy of W.E.D. Gray Collection, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

School at Daniel, Wyoming. c. 1916

In those few country schools still surviving on the wind-swept prairies, the Christmas program remains the highlight of the year. Charlene Taylor from Beresford, South Dakota, described in **The Scene**, December 21, 1978, that year's Christmas program.

> It was no Broadway opening, and the admission was free. No bright marquee marked the entrance to the theatre, and no red carpet was rolled out to greet stars and important people.
>
> But last Friday night was an important night for the 12 students who attended the Brule Elementary School near Beresford. It was the night of their Christmas play, and parents, relatives, and friends, important people all, turned out in high numbers to applaud their performance and reward their efforts with appreciative ovations.
>
> An audience of well over 100 squeezed themselves into the one-room school house, and seemed to ignore any discomfort that might have attended sitting on wooden benches brought in especially for the program. A brightly lighted stage at the front of the room, complete with black curtains, became the center of attention, once friendly greetings had been completed and everyone was seated in readiness for the show.
>
> Excitement filled the air as one of the students began to play a Christmas melody on the old upright piano off to one side of the stage. A little guy stood beside me on the bench, teddy bear clutched in his hands, eyes bright with expectation. Two ladies behind me reminisced about the days when each district had its own country school, and each school would have its own Christmas play.
>
> 'Are they gonna singing?' my little bench partner inquired, in a squeaky voice.
>
> Assured by his grandmother they would, his attention returned to the stage where the children were preparing to sing a song of Norwegian origin entitled "Jeg er saa Glod" Female students were attired in floor-length gowns in the style of their Norwegian ancestry.
>
> The first skit of the program featured a song entitled "My Kitty," sung by Lois Sveeggen and Tisha Staum. The song, announced by Mrs. Yttreness, the students' teacher, was first sung in a program at Brule School some 50 odd years ago by her sister and another student. Along with myself, the audience was impressed and applause for the two young ladies thundered through the room. The tiny tyke beside me clung tighter to his teddy bear.
>
> The program progressed with more music and carols. The nativity scene was enacted, with first grader, Ann Stene, long, red hair trailing over her shoulders, eyes serious with the importance of her role, belting out "Away In a Manger" in a surprisingly clear and even voice.
>
> The last skit of the evening, "At the Village Post Office," brought the house down with laughter and cheers as the audience watched the youngsters act out a drama dealing with gossiping and nosiness....
>
> "We Wish You a Merry Christmas," sung by the entire cast, brought the final curtain down on the most enjoyable hour and a half I've experienced in a good long while. It was quite evident by the applause that my fellow play goers enjoyed this bit of old-fashioned entertainment every bit as much as I did.
>
> In the true tradition of the country school, lunch was served in the basement for donations, homemade candies and popcorn balls were sold to raise money to defray expenses of the program, and a door prize was awarded.
>
> As I prepared to leave, I looked around for my little bench partner, but he had disappeared. Sadly, I contemplated the future when gatherings like this one would probably become extinct, like the schools that spawned them. I wondered if years from now the little teddy bear holder would remember this night, the noise, the excitement. I wondered if someday, as an adult somewhere out there in the computerized world, he would look back and long for these traditions that we are leaving behind us so lightly.
>
> I hoped not. I hoped he would remember Mrs. Yttreness and her 12 pupils of Brule School, and the thrill they gave us all by presenting their "Old Fashioned Christmas Play."

* * * * * *

Material for this section not otherwise credited came from staff members: Herb Blakely, Madison, South Dakota; Caroline Hatton, Edgemont, South Dakota; Milton Riske, Cheyenne, Wyoming; Robert Barthell, Powell, Wyoming; Jessie Embry, Provo, Utah; Nancy Cummings and Dorothy Ritenour, Las Vegas, Nevada.

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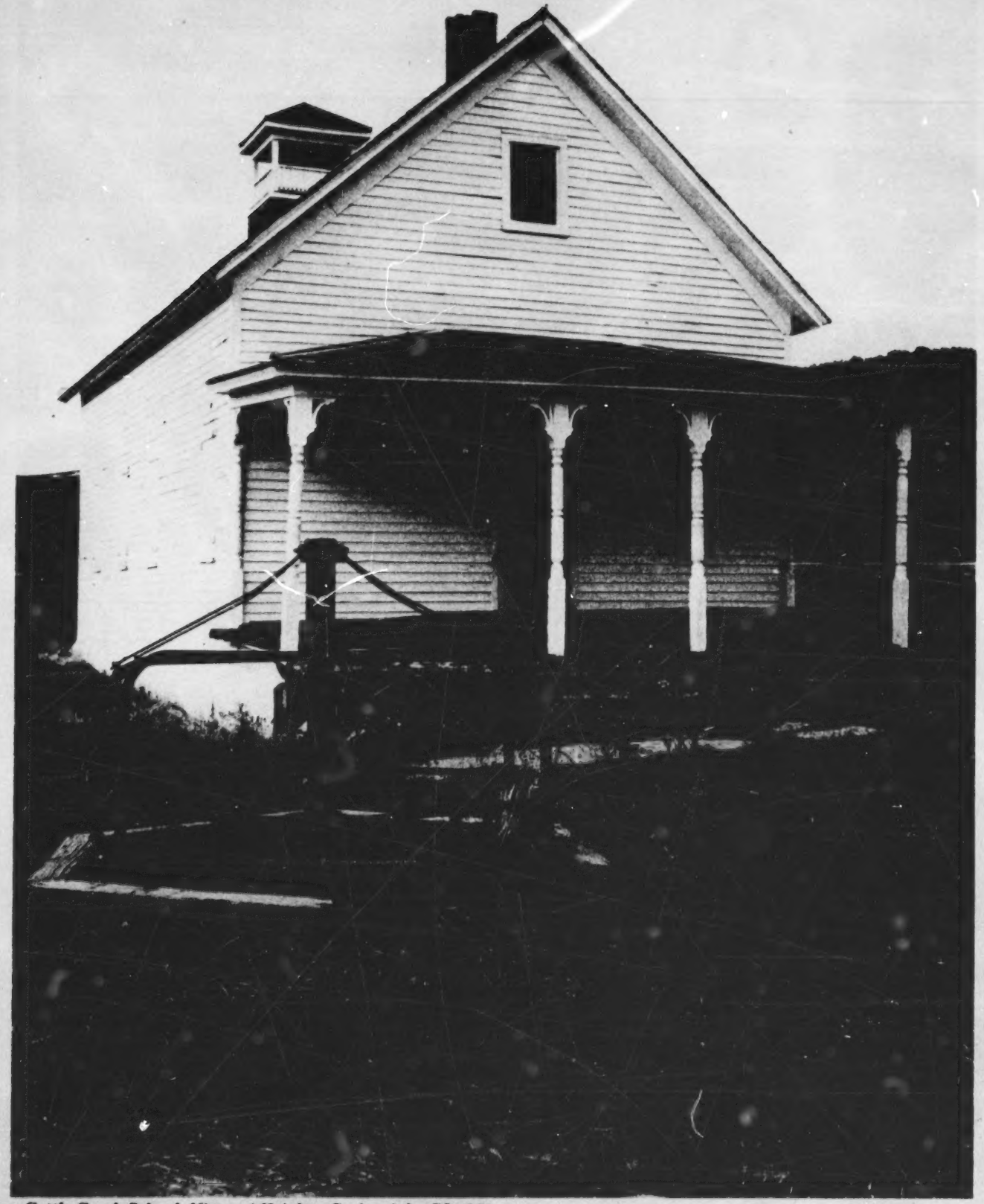

Photo by Andrew Gulliford

Cattle Creek School, Missouri Heights, Carbondale, CO 1978

COUNTRY SCHOOLS TODAY

The rural one-room school is dying....It is easy to eulogize a memory and cast on it in death qualities it never possessed in life....yet it is of little value to simply cry over what is done. If we examine what was good, what was useful in the one-room school and translate this to our modern educational system we shall have achieved a great deal.

Marian Cramer
Bryant, South Dakota
Papers of the Twelfth
Annual Dakota History Conference

As late as 1938, there were 210,000 one-room schools scattered throughout the United States. Today there are only a dozen one-room schools in Colorado, 189 rural schools in South Dakota, 22 one-room schools in North Dakota (1978 statistics), 33 small rural schools in Wyoming, and 305 country schools in Nebraska.

In 1975 the Utah State Building Board conducted a survey of public schools in use in the state. The survey revealed that the majority of rural schools had been closed, and the students were being bused to consolidated schools. There were approximately 24 schools with enrollments of less than 100, and many of those were small graded schools like the ones at Escalante and Marysvale. Today, only one country school remains.

Many small rural schools are still in existence in the large counties in the northern, western, and southern parts of Utah where the population is scattered. The main exception is the Cedar Fort School which is only sixteen miles from Lehi.

Only one non-consolidated school still exists in Kansas, near Dermont. It is the last remaining one-room school in the state, and parents are threatened with losing the school if enrollment drops any further. Ten students are enrolled currently, and that is the legal minimum. Two of the students will graduate this year, and unless they are replaced, Dermont will lose the school and the remaining pupils will be bused to Rolla, thirty-five miles away.

In northern Nevada the Leonard Creek Ranch one-room school is still in operation and has four students this year. The school is located 90 miles north of Winnemucca and has served Montero children and their relatives since 1918.

The teacher this year, Sandy Kearns, receives an ample salary, a free trailer, free meals, and even free gasoline for her pickup. But after teaching just two years, she is willing to give up her position because, "the ninety miles out here is pretty hard. I'm not a good planner for weeks in advance. I always come out a little short. I was scared coming out here, but I gave my word and couldn't go back on it. To go to a party it's forty miles to the nearest neighbors. After school you go out and saddle up your horse and separate cattle until dark. Then you come back for supper."

Frenchy Montero has two children under Sandy's tutelage. Sandy laughs, "I was lonely coming out here, but they accepted me as one of the family. We went to a wedding recently and Frenchy introduced me as his daughter. Frenchy works hard to find single cowboys in the area that I might like, but the last time he tried it the scheme backfired. The one I liked moved to California ...."

Other country schools in operation in Nevada include a three-teacher school at Ruby Valley and a one-teacher, one-trailer school at Jiggs, where individualized instruction flourishes.

Dan Vogeler likes teaching in the Brown's Park one-room school in Colorado. He likes the sense of community among the fifteen families that live "in the park." He doesn't mind being eighty miles from a grocery store when he's only a few miles from his neighbors.

Dan says, "Out here the school is the center of things. Most times parents stop by the school to visit and then go over to the trailer to talk with my wife. One mother, Ramona Johnson, brings her first-grader sixty miles one way in a jeep. Naturally she's not in a hurry to turn around and go back to the ranch."

Teachers contemplating jobs in remote rural areas should realize that although they are physically isolated, the school acts as a focal point for the community. Teacher privacy is sometimes sacrificed. But if there is an implied obligation to conform to community values, there are also opportunities for independence and innovation.

In country schools, the older students still help the littler ones, especially with math and spelling. The teacher can take the time to individualize lessons, and younger students learn what is expected of them because they hear older children working on more advanced lessons.

The quality of education is good, and students from country schools develop a firm sense of themselves and what they can accomplish. Dr. Ivan Muse, professor of education at Brigham Young University and director of a rural education teacher training program, says, "Rural school graduates are highly self-confident. They may receive poorer grades in the elementary school, but once they begin college they are easily motivated and usually succeed. They quickly compensate for any curriculum deficiencies."

Self-reliance is a way of life in the rural areas of the West, and teachers have to be self-reliant, too. More and more teaching jobs will open up in the Western "energy" states, but living accommodations will be scarce and

Photo by Andrew Gulliford

Jiggs School, Elko County, NV. Aline Mooney, teacher.

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conditions will vary widely.

"Low pay and teacher isolation are perennial rural school problems," says Eugene J. Cambell, Colorado Department of Education certification consultant. Although pay scales have risen in recent years, rural teacher housing shortages have been common for half a century. There is also sex-role stereotyping.

A young, single, female school teacher in Nevada states that her rural school superintendent told her, "You are hired unless I can find a man." He felt that in a conservative community a man is better situated to teach and assist the upper boys.

Dr. Alan Zetler, Dean of Education and Director of the Rural Education Center at Western Montana College in Dillon, Montana says, "There are school districts that search very hard to get one or two serious applicants for vacancies. To the local folks, social isolation and lack of urban services are facts of life and present no real problems." Yet to a new teacher, the rosy, rural glow may quickly fade.

Not so at the Brown's Park School. Like most successful rural school teachers, Dan Vogeler comes from a rural background. He enjoys the opportunity to take his class on raft trips down the Green River or boating up at Flaming Gorge Reservoir.

Dan says, "I'm not sure I could go back to a regular teaching schedule in a town school...I like to be independent." Because there is no church close by, the entire community came to the one-room school this winter to be at the christening of the Vogeler's four-month-old daughter. Obviously the parent/teacher relationship is special in Brown's Park.

In Wyoming the Albany County School District may be the largest school district in the continental United States. The district is large not because of the number of students, but because it encompasses 4,374 square miles—more square miles than the state of Rhode Island. Albany County also has more rural schools than most districts.

Wyoming winters can send blizzards that block roads, stop travelers, and break lines of communication for days on end, and concerned parents do not want to worry about their children being stranded in a school bus. The Albany County School District, recognizing its obligation to serve all the children in its district, maintains schools close to the outlying communities. This year Cozy Hollow School has only one student, as does River Bridge, Palmer Canyon, and Indian Guide.

There are eight distant rural schools in the north end of the county and five closer rural schools. The distant schools are 50 to 125 miles from Laramie. Five schools do not have telephones and keep in contact via radios. One quaint one-room schoolhouse has given way to a modern trailer where the teacher lives in one half and teaches in the other.

The Little Laramie Valley School was consolidated from three other schools. Each child

Photo by Andrew Gulliford

Brown's Park School, Colorado. Dan Vogeler, teacher.

I was in a rural county the other day where the farmers were talking about consolidating several one-room school districts and building a modern grade and high school.

A good many farmers were opposed to it and one of them asked me: "Why isn't a one-room school good enough for us? Some of the greatest men and women of this country, of the past and of today, got their education in the little old red schoolhouse in the country, and it was a one-room, one-teacher school.

"Look at Abraham Lincoln and a host of other great men; they never had a newfangled school with all its frills and furbelows to go to. If a one-room school was good enough for them why isn't it good enough for us?"

"Your grandfather got along with an oxcart, too, didn't he?" I asked. "And he cut wheat with a sickle and threshed it with a flail; he read by a tallow candle and carried water from the creek a half mile away. He got along.

"But those things were not good enough for your father. Oxen were too slow for him. He had horses and a buggy. He cradled his wheat and had a threshing machine. A scythe was too slow, and he bought a mowing machine and a riding plow. He threw away the hoe and got a cultivator, and your mother had a sewing machine and a well near the house and kerosene lamps."

"None of the old-time tools or ways was good enough for you, except the school. You scrapped everything your fathers had, except the one-room school. Why don't you scrap it too? It belongs to an age that is past."

"I believe with all my heart that country children should have schoolhouses as good, school terms as long and teachers as well trained as city children have. And I believe they can have them too. But in the average one-room school we have a short term, irregular attendance, a poorly trained teacher, absence of uniform standards of achievement in elementary grades, no special classes for the brighter children, poor supervision and poor financial support...."

In Kansas in the year just closed we had 7,339 one-teacher rural schools, and they furnished the only chance that 214,928 boys and girls had for an education.

The majority of them were what are called cracker-box or boxcarschools. They were poorly heated, poorly lighted, dingy and unattractive....

The people of the community should be told clearly what consolidation will mean for them and what it will cost.

A school consolidation should never be put through if there is a considerable minority opposed to it.

But where the people know what consolidation means, what it will cost and are willing to pay for it, consolidation is the solution to the rural-school problem.

by Jess W. Miley
State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Kansas
from "The Country Gentleman" Oct. 4, 1924

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has his own swing and teeter-totter. The modern-style brick building opened in 1963, and Mrs. Edith Clymer says, "I opened her up, and I hope I don't close her down." Declining enrollments, however, are taking their toll, and next year there may be only four primary students.

At the Harmony School twenty miles west of Laramie, Shirley Lilley explains that children go to country school as long as they can, but when those students are ready for junior high and senior high in town, parents have to maintain two homes. For seven years, Mrs. Lilley would leave the ranch each week to stay in town with her children. "I didn't like being away from home," she says. "Every Monday morning I'd be a terrible grouch. I'd get home Friday evening and have to start baking and cooking for the next week ahead. You live out of a box—one box for the ranch and one box for the trailer in town."

Mrs. Lilley's story is common in rural Wyoming where parents are awarded "isolation pay" from the district to help compensate for maintaining two homes. Teachers are also isolated. Last year at one of the north schools in Albany County, from Thanksgiving to early May the road was buried under snow. Only four-wheel drive vehicles could gain access.

"North county" teachers try to get together once a week to share food and fellowship, and as long as the roads are clear they may drive ninety miles one way for dinner. Such meals are important to discuss classroom activities and to plan class parties.

* * *

In most states, the country schools have been consolidated. When cars came upon the scene, small towns grew and prospered. Farmers could live in town and work their places during the day. Buses could carry more students, and those same fiscal-minded school boards could no longer justify one teacher for a handful of students in one building. After World War I, Colorado country schools began to close their doors, and after World War II, the rich legacy of one- and two-room schools was all but forgotten.

For a while, some school districts fought against consolidation. A school could be maintained for two years without a teacher, but if a third year went by, the tiny district would be forced to merge with another district. Families with older children or no children would have to pay taxes in the newly-defined larger district. For that reason, desperate districts would even hire married teachers with children to teach their own offspring. Anything to keep the district intact.

Box socials raised funds. In Karval, Colorado the women's club even wrote to President Wilson's wife to have her send a small token

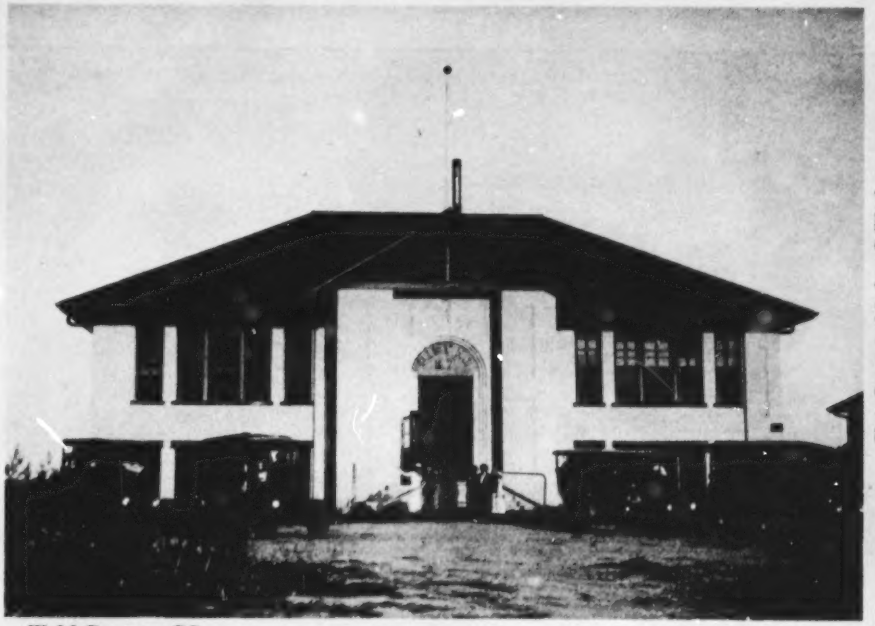

Photo Courtesy of Andrew Gulliford

Weld County, CO

Photo Courtesy of Denver Public Library

Six old buildings in Colorado replaced by consolidation.

IN APPRECIATION

(Speech given by Mrs. Louise Jevne in May, 1956, at Medrose School #2, Ward County, North Dakota the last year the school was in session.)

Mr. Martin, President of the School Board, I present to you Kermit Martin and Dwight Kauffman. These boys have worked hard, and they have successfully completed, with passing grades, both the State Examinations and the ones I gave. It is with pleasure that I present them to you for their diplomas.

We are indeed grateful to each of you for the fine cooperation you have given to make this program successful. We are honored to have you with us, Miss Hoffine (an author). Thank you for coming.

Mr. Payne (county superintendent), we appreciate your being here to present the awards. Our relations with your office have always been pleasant and we are happy to have you here.

At this time, I wish to express my gratitude to the board for all they have done to make our year successful. I know I have been fortunate to have good school boards to work for, but I can honestly say I have never found any better than you. Thank you for your cooperation.

Being a parent myself, I know some of the problems you mothers and fathers have, some of the sacrifices you make for your children, and some of the pride you share with them in their successes. You have a right to be proud of each of your boys and girls. They have worked hard and they have succeeded. These are not just nice words to please you. The student teacher's tests, my tests, the Stanford Achievement Tests, and the State Exams all prove this to be true. You are to be commended for the encouragement you have given your children that has made this kind of progress possible. Thank you for all you have done. We expect this to be the last graduation from this school.

The past two years here have been happy ones. I like working with Miss Ewen and the student teachers. I love your boys and girls as only a teacher can.

Thank you for the privilege of being your teacher.

Photo by Andrea Gulliford

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AN EIGHTH GRADER'S BROADER VIEW

(Address by Kermit Martin at the Medrose School, May, 1956.)

Back in May, 1949, when I stood before many of you folks and gave THE RABBIT for our Mothers Day program, my view was not broad enough to think ahead to tonight to see myself standing here to give these few words of appreciation. BUT HERE I AM.

Our motto says THE HIGHER WE CLIMB THE BROADER THE VIEW. Through the past eight years Dwight and I have come to realize, in some measure, that there is much to appreciate in our home, in our school, and in our community.

We are glad for our good homes, where we have been taught consideration and love for others, cleanliness, thrift, work, worship of God, and many other necessary things. I remember when it did not seem so important to wash my ears but now I know that Mom knows best.

When we started to school we took all the routine more or less as a matter of course. Later we began to question. "Why should we learn about men who have been dead for years?" "What difference does it make whether a word is a noun or a verb?" It's a word ain't it? And O yes, why shouldn't we say AIN'T. It seems everyone does. Our view has broadened until we know a few of the whys although, I confess — not all.

But we are grateful for all our teachers have done for us. Too — we say THANK YOU to the college, the student teachers, Miss Ewen and the school board. We know you have done much to help us.

We are also thankful for the wonderful community in which we live. I'm sure we will never find any better neighbors and friends than you folks.

May the view which has begun to broaden continue to do so as we continue to climb. We desire to be a credit to our home, our school, and our community.

Thank you.

Kermit Martin now farms the land of his father and grandfather near Minot, North Dakota, and Dwight Kauffman is a physician in Iowa.

Photo by Andrew Gulliford

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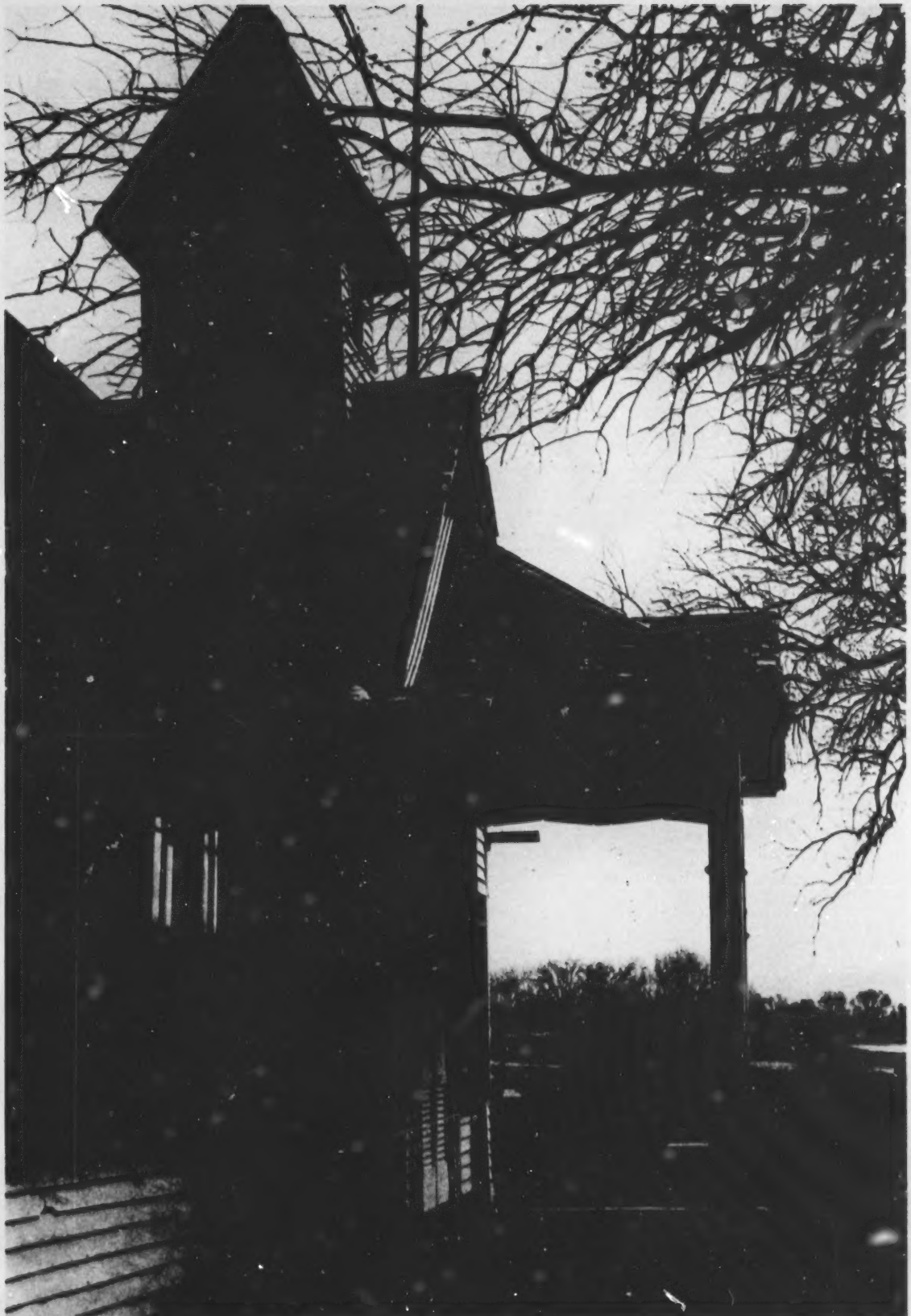

Photo by Andrew Gulliford

Antlers School, east of Rifle, and last servicable horse barn.

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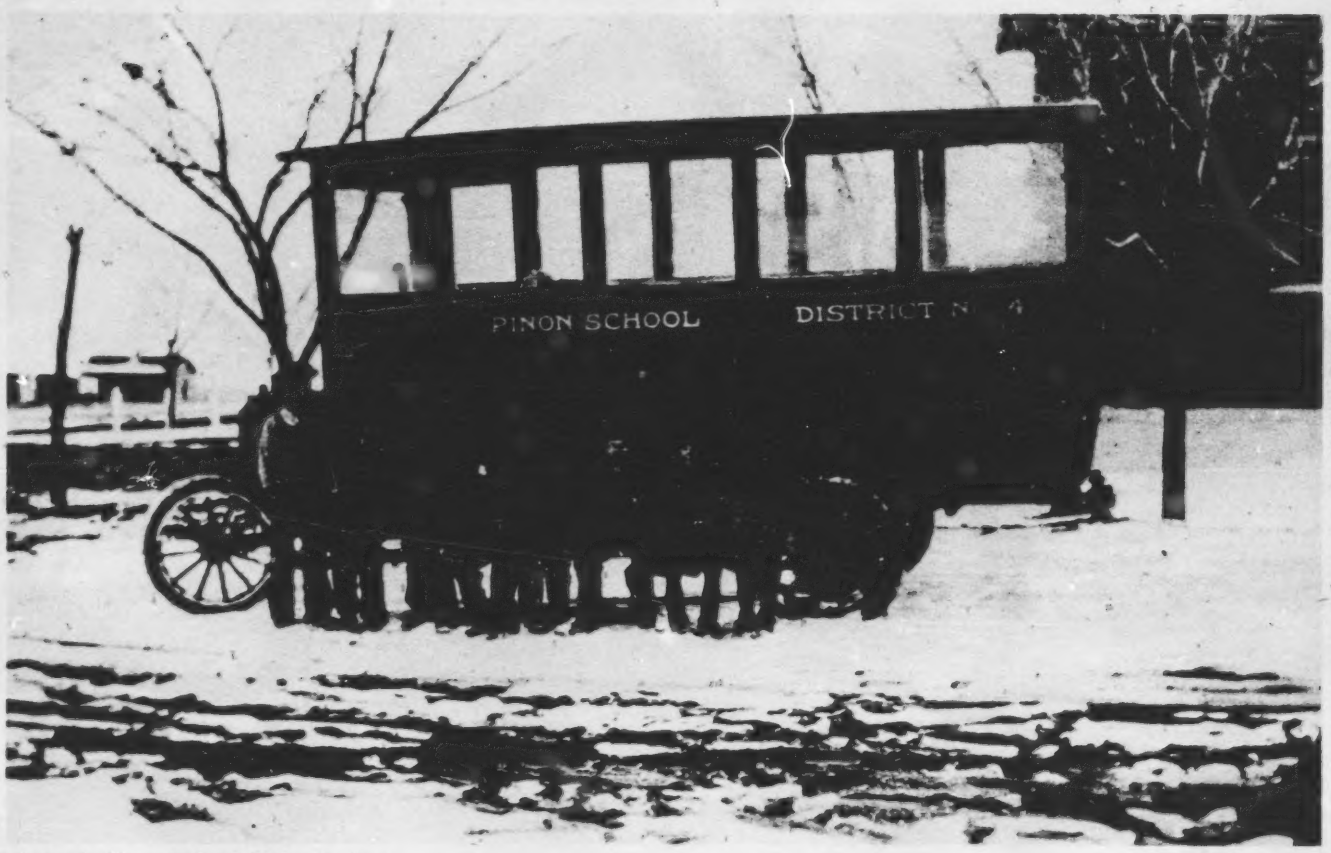

Photo Courtesy of Pueblo Regional Library

An early Pinon School, Colorado, bus.

to be auctioned off. The handkerchief she sent fetched a high price.

Consolidation did come, however, and most rural schools closed down in favor of the larger, more modern district schools. As in the sandhills of Nebraska, distance is still a big problem in much of western South Dakota. The children who attend rural schools travel long distances to get to that one-room building, where they spend the day with other children whose homes are just as remote from community life as their own. Imagine the nearest school being twenty-five miles away and when you get there, there are only six other students!

In one such school, there are two kindergartners, two first-graders, one second-grader, one third-grader, and one fourth-grader. The school will likely continue for at least eight more years. Then perhaps, it will be closed or moved, because all the children of the ranchers in that vicinity will be gone. By that time a younger age group who live in the area will have grown up, married, and started families, but probably not on the same ranches, so the center of population will shift. The schoolhouse might be moved, another old one revived, or the school left in the same place with some families traveling farther than others.

No small common school districts remained in western South Dakota after reorganization

The Rock Creek School bus, Rifle, CO. One-room stone School House used since 1891.

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took place in the 1960's. Every small rural school is part of a school district which often covers hundreds of square miles. But these schools carry on much like they did when they served much smaller areas. Several teachers commented that their school children are like a family: the teacher knows each one personally and knows the weaknesses of each. Students can work on their own, get help from the teacher on a one-to-one basis, and have the opportunity to participate in all the activities.

Cheryl Carstensen, the teacher at Alfalfa Valley School said, "I feel that younger and older students learn from each other, not only subject matter but how to give and take. They learn how to work with and cooperate with others, despite vast differences."

Ranch families live and work together, and few fathers go off to a daily job in which their family has no part. The ranch is the family job, not just the father's responsibility, and that makes for close family ties. Because of this there is more personal contact between teachers and parents.

Photo by Andrew Gulliford

Shay Delp, (7) at Browns Park School, wearing a gift from his father—an elk's tooth between two badger claws.

Silt School playground, Colorado

As Ms. Carstensen said, "There is closer contact with both the parents of students in a rural school." As another teacher expressed it, "It is a very peaceful atmosphere with very few noisy distractions and plenty of fresh, clean air. There are lots of wide open spaces for quite a variety of activities at recess and in classroom work. Mostly the advantage comes from the people. Everyone is so friendly and parents are always willing to help." Paula Eisenbraun, who teaches at Big Foot School in the Badlands, said an advantage to teaching in such a place is that "nature is at your front door, which is most inspiring and excellent for experiments."

The 1980 United States Census made it clear that there is a strong tide of migration back to rural areas. This new generation of urban and suburban refugees have indicated a clear preference for traditional values and uncomplicated lifestyles. Perhaps the country school will no longer be a relic from the past. The economic factors that pointed the way towards consolidation fifty and sixty years ago have now reversed themselves.

At $19,000 a piece for new school buses, not including bus driver's salaries, maintenance, insurance, and rapidly escalating gasoline costs, solar and wind-powered country schools may be the wave of the future. Energy-efficient country schools provided with periodic music, health, and special education services similar to their urban counterparts would probably gain strong community support. Realize that the big push for consolidation took place when gasoline was only 25¢ a gallon.

Photo by Andrew Gulliford

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Parents and administrators need to look at alternatives. In Colorado in the 1980-1981 school year, fourteen rural school districts have switched to four day school weeks with either Monday or Friday off. The experiment is patterned after a program launched by the Cimarron, New Mexico public schools and is designed to save energy. In at least two studies, however, not only was energy saved, but because of 10-hour days, teachers found themselves at least two weeks ahead of lesson plans made the previous year.

Country schools may once again flourish for another reason; parents are increasingly dissatisfied with current urban education. As Marian Cramer states:

> The baneful notion that parents as a class are neither qualified nor responsible human agents when it comes to the schooling of their children must be challenged ....

The cold, poorly lit one-room schools denounced in the early 1900's by such experts as N.C. MacDonald from North Dakota and Jess W. Miley from Kansas no longer serve the public. Inexperienced teachers have been replaced by young professionals. Tight-fisted, penny-pinching school boards have given way to well financed and state-supported school districts. E.F. Schumacher's "small is beautiful" ethic is beginning to make sense to many people. The time is ripe for a renaissance in rural education.

In the last twenty years, education innovation has consistently derived from country school roots. The "open concept" plan is a direct descendant of the one-room school. "Individualized instruction," now an educational by-word, was the only possible way for one teacher to teach twenty-five students at eight different grade levels. A recent movement towards replacing graded classrooms with "family" groupings mirrors the close-knit ties of the country school experience. "Peer counseling" is a new definition for students helping students; country school kids, with the teacher's sanction, have done this for years. Hennetta Greenfield, a retired teacher with forty-four years of experience, made a very pertinent observation when she said, "In the rural school the child was taught eight times over."

One-room "country" schools may first appear in urban areas where parents seek better control over the classroom and its content. Along the Wasatch Front in Utah, the private traditional school is flourishing, as is the even more radical concept of the home school.

Quite possibly the future of successful education in this country is dependent upon a return not only to the basics which were unerringly taught in country schools, but also to the community values which country schools represented. It is amazing how much of the school's time and efforts went into teaching students how to live with one another and to find a niche within the surrounding community. The rural country school is the only institution which seems to have no successor to fill its place.

Photo by Andrew Gulliford

Leonard Creek Ranch School, 90 miles north of Winnemuka, NV. Teacher Sandy Kearns and one of four students.

The country school, like the agrarian society envisioned by Thomas Jefferson, has collided with the scientific/technical world and has been beaten, or at least seriously set back. Whether this will be a permanent loss no one can tell. Judging from the people interviewed and the documents examined, the country school has much to offer in the way of turning out human beings who can share with one another and enjoy a sense of community. Maybe that is their role today, creating an alternate life style of sharing and joy among human beings.

The country school legacy requires careful examination. The key to its future lies in its past.

* * *

Portions of this essay by Andrew Gulliford originally appeared in "The Christian Science Monitor." Other material is from staff members Sarah Judge, Topeka, Kansas; Dan Rylance, Grand Forks, North Dakota; Caroline Hatton, Edgemont, South Dakota; Herbert Blakely, Madison, South Dakota; Jessie Embry, Provo, Utah; Robert Barthell, Powell, Wyoming.

"Poet in Residence at a Country School"

The school greets me like a series
of sentence fragments sent out to recess.
Before I hit the front door
I'm into a game of baseball soccer.
My first kick's a foul; my second sails
over the heads of the outfielders;
rounding third base, I suck in my stomach
and dodge the throw of a small blue-eyed boy.
I enter the school, sucking apples of wind.
In the fifth-grade section of the room
I stand in the center of an old rug and ask,
Where would you go where no one could find you,
a secret place where you'd be invisible
to everyone except yourselves;
what would you do there; what would you say?
I ask them to imagine they're there,
and writing a poem. As I walk around the room,
I look at the wrists of the kids,
green and alive, careful with silence.
They are writing themselves into fallen elms,
corners of barns, washouts, and alkali flats.
I watch until a tiny boy approaches,
who says he can't think of a place,
who wonders today, at least, if
he just couldn't sit on my lap.
Tomorrow, he says, he'll write.
And so the two of us sit under a clock,
beside a gaudy picture of a butterfly,
and a sweet poem of Christina Rosetti's.
And in all that silence, neither of us
can imagine where he'd rather be.

Dr. Donovan Welch
Kearney State College
Kearney, Nebraska

Photo by Andrew Gulliford

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Anyone having additional material on country schools from the eight states listed above is encouraged to send it to the appropriate address.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

write a good hand	to write perfect penmanship with all of the frills and swirls accompanying the Spencerian or Palmer method.
black snake	bullwhip, displayed in some country schools for the benefit of unruly students; no documentation of a teacher ever using one.
privy	outhouse. Variations included everything from three-hole outhouses to just one-hole for the girls, and boys used the stable.
McGuffey's Readers	a series of a primer and six graded readers using selections of literary merit designed to suit the age level and interest of the students. First published in 1836 with sales of over 125 million by 1920.
spoke a piece	to stand in front of the class or the community and to recite a poem or speech memorized 'by heart.'
standard school	refers to standards of heat, lighting, and sanitation set forth in the early 1900's to upgrade rural schools. Standards varied slightly from state to state. Usually playground equipment was required.
teacher's institute	summer courses for teachers that lasted from six to ten days; often it was the first education that teachers received after graduating from eighth grade.
orthography	spelling. Spelling matches or spell downs were favorite events for classes and communities.
rally day	any rally or social event that occurred at a country school; usually an all day affair such as—discussion of women's right to vote, prohibition, new farming techniques, religious revivals, etc.
normal school	original name for higher education teacher preparation school; many have evolved into four year colleges and universities.

OUR LITTLE COUNTRY SCHOOL

REFRAIN:
Out on the windswept prairie,
Up in the clear cold mountains
Stands a little country schoolhouse,
With a bell and a pot-bellied stove.
Down in the red clay canyons,
Way out on a grassy hill—
We haven't forgotten
Our little country school,
And you know we never will.

1st Verse
In Broken Bone and Dunkley,
In Fly Gulch and Pagoda,
We learned our ABC's,
We added our 1,2,3's,
We sat down when we missed a word
At the good old spelling bee.

2nd Verse
At Prairie Rose and Fairview,
At Moon Hill and Coal Creek,
We brought our own lunch pail,
On horseback and through dale,
Sometimes we earned a spanking,
And our ponies heard us wail.

3rd Verse
In Kansas and Nevada,
In Utah and Wyoming,
McGuffey's were so dear,
They taught us our Shakespeare,
We pledged allegiance to the flag
From first grade through the years.

4th Verse
In Nebraska and Dakota,
In Colorado too,
Our Schoolhouse was a key
To learning history,
Hands of our parents built the school,
And began the community.

REFRAIN:
Out on the windswept prairie,
Up in the clear cold mountains
Stands a little country schoolhouse,
With a bell and a pot-bellied stove.
Down in the red clay canyons,
Way out on a grassy hill—
We haven't forgotten
Our little country school,
And you know we never will.

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY:
Humanities on the Frontier

Project Director—Andrew Gulliford

Media Director—Randall Teeuwen

Exhibits Director—Berkeley Lobanov

FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION TEXT

> After one look at the building, I was sure I had lost my mind. It was built of rough boards with double-boarded walls with tarpaper between the boards. We had a small box heater to heat the building which it didn't do in cold weather. When it was really cold we moved the desks up as close as we could to the stove.
>
> Olive Salladay, Teacher,
> South Park, Colorado, 1927

At the turn of the century, the United States had 200,000 one-room schools, but now there are little more than a thousand in operation. What happened to all of those simple white frame buildings that dotted the prairie or were tucked away in narrow mountain valleys?

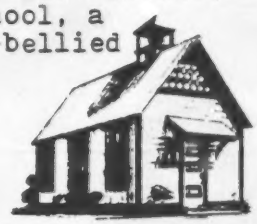
They had names like Brush Creek School, Fairview, Broken Bone, Windy Point, Pagoda, Dunkley, Sleepy Cat, Elk Head, Moon Hill, and Fly Gulch.

From 1870 until 1940, the one-room school played a vital part in the settling of the American West. Rural America was raised in a country school, and those values and traditions which make up our combined heritage were taught by teachers in isolated communities on vast sweeps of the mountains and plains. The buildings remain as silent testaments to a nation of immigrants bent on success.

No one knows how many one-room school buildings still stand. Those schools that have not been burned or demolished are being destroyed by simple neglect and natural deterioration.

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

Architecturally the schools are as diverse as those who built them. All of the schools are made from whatever materials were at hand--wood, stone, logs, adobe, brick, and sod. The first Nebraska schools were little more than sod huts with dirt floors, crude doors, and leaky roofs. In one Kansas sod school, a snake fell through the roof only to land on the pot-bellied stove and begin to sizzle!



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The line blurs and the definitions blend as to what constitutes a country school, but the rationale is the same in every state. A community with a school was a community with a future. Unlike the east where the settlers built churches first, in the West all manner of men were to be found who spoke a variety of languages and held quite different religious beliefs. Schools therefore took priority.

In the years from 1875 schoolhouses were erected in Nebraska at the rate of approximately one each day--and for the next quarter century, a new schoolhouse was erected every two days. In Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska, a school was built in 1886 with walls of baled straw, a sod roof, and a dirt floor. It was sixteen feet long, twelve feet wide, and seven feet high. Within two years cattle had devoured it!

CROSS LIGHTING

In a building without electricity and with no budget for kerosene, lighting presented a serious problem. Most schools, therefore, had windows on the east and the blackboard on the west. Some schools had windows on both sides, but for years the notion prevailed that if light came from two sources, students doing written work would ruin their eyes. A few brave districts tackled the problem by putting windows to the north for a constant, even light, but the building must have been freezing cold in winter.

Says Nora Mohberg, retired teacher from Milnor, North Dakota:

> "The country schoolhouse was the most utilitarian building imaginable but in most instances it had one serious drawback. That was the cross lighting that often injured the eyes of the students without being noticed. If the windows were in the north and south walls, the damage was not so great. But windows on the east and west often created reflections that were injurious to the eyes of the students although no one really understood what was happening at that time."

INTERIORS

Most schools were plainly furnished with a woodstove, blackboard, teacher's desk, students' desks, and very few books, slates, maps and charts. Occasionally the teacher's desk was on an elevated platform at the front of the room and the blackboard rose above vertical hardwood wainscotting.

Books were few because rural farmers and ranchers had very little disposable cash, and it was their taxes that ran the small local school districts. Quite often the rural teacher with a meager income of only $50 a month had the only steady income in the district.

Regardless of finances, however, every school proudly displayed the American flag and the ever present portraits of Washington and Lincoln--often bought with money from the teacher's pocket. Countless immigrant children revered those portraits as the greatest symbols of our nation. Washington represented the founding of our country and Lincoln was honored for preserving our unity.

PLAYGROUNDS

Country schools had very little playground equipment, if any, and what they had usually was homemade. Instead children played games that required no equipment such as "Annie Over", "Fox and Geese", "Pom, Pom, Pull Away", and a hundred variations of tag, "Blind Man's Bluff" and "Simon Says."

In Wyoming, children enjoyed chasing gophers. Killing rattlesnakes was also great fun in the plains states. Baseball became popular when districts could afford bats, balls, and mits. Then, of course, many students enjoyed playing tricks on the teacher who was often young, single, female, and not much older than her scholars.

The standardization movement swept across the country before Word War I and districts competed to upgrade local education with better schools, outhouses, school libraries, and playground equipment.

LIFESTYLE

Country schools dominated rural education in the West in those historic years between the fencing of the open range and the first black-topped roads. Schools were built to serve the community and centrally located so that children had no more than four miles to walk to school.

During the day, children from the first through the eighth grade worked and learned as one big family. Older children helped younger ones, and in turn the younger children listened to the older ones recite. Children knew what was expected of them and everyone had a role in plays or a position on the baseball team.

At night and on holidays, parents used the building as a community center for voting, dancing, card-playing, socializing, debating, church, Sunday school, weddings, funerals, grange meetings and water board meetings.

The country school was the focal point of rural communities, and many generations of Americans received their entire formal education in a one-room white clapboard school.

In the words of Dr. Fred Schroeder:

> But the farther I travel from that quaint and fragrant beginning, the closer is my affinity to the goals of the resourceful and idealistic rural teacher for whom no subject, course or age was separated from its neighbors, and with whom the school day became an invitation to circles of experience, widening outward from the common room so that child, community, nature, books, and imagination were unified in an adventure of growing and learning.

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY:
Humanities on the Frontier

Project Director—Andrew Gulliford

Media Director—Randall Teeuwen *Exhibits Director—Berkeley Lobanov*

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY: HUMANITIES ON THE FRONTIER

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* fifty 11 by 14 color and black & white prints framed 16 by 20
* country school photographs from eight states
* all photos taken between June, 1980 and June, 1981

1. Bustos School: Huerfano County, CO by Edwin L. Dodds
Located south of Highway #10 near Cucharas Reservoir, the school is names for the Bustos family who homesteaded in the area in the 1870's. The family came from Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico.

2. Willows School: Custer County, CO by Edwin L. Dodds
Children who once attended this school south of Westcliffe now square dance here.

3. Granite School: Custer County, CO by Edwin L. Dodds
Located on a ridge east of Granite, the school closed in 1958. It appears to be two one-room schools spliced together; a not uncommon occurence.

4. Howard School: Fremont County, CO by Edwin L. Dodds
This school is west of Howard. No coin was needed to pass through this turnstile to get an education. Howard School had the only wallpapered outhouse found in southern Colorado; it was green to match the classroom walls.

5. Nathrop School: Lake County, CO by Edwin L. Dodds
The architect must have modeled this, the only school in Nathrop, after churches built back East.

6. Malta School: Lake County, CO by Edwin L. Dodds
Located west of Leadville along highway #24, the community of Malta was named for the Malta Smelting Works. There is a teacherage to the rear of the building, and the Malta School has the only surviving wagon shed in southern Colorado.

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7. Cedarwood School: Pueblo County, CO by Edwin L. Dodds
This view is typical of the isolation of many country schools. The building is east of Colorado City.

8. Mount Pleasant School: Alamosa County, CO by Edwin L. Dodds
Perhaps the trees are mute testimony to some remote Arbor Day program. The school is west of Alamosa.

9. Westcliffe School: Custer County, CO by Edwin L. Dodds
This Westcliffe school was restored by the community as a Colorado Centennial-Bicentennial project in 1976.

10. Malachite School: Huerfano County, CO by Edwin L. Dodds
Located southwest of Redwing, this was one of several schools which had over the entrance a sign proclaiming it a "State of Colorado, Approved Standard School".

11. Mustang School: Huerfano County, CO by Edwin L. Dodds
This school is located near the Pueblo County Line close to the Denver and Rio Grande railroad. A number of Swedish families lived in the area, and the teacher's quarters were in the east side of the building.

12. Maxwell Mine Church/School: Las Animas County, CO by Edwin L. Dodds
Accounts vary as to the use of this building which is listed in the Historic American Building Survey. The school is on the Maxwell Mine property.

13. Paragon School: Gunnison County, CO by Andrew Gulliford (color)
The Paragon School has been moved to the Pioneer Museum grounds at Gunnison. The curved front windows and elaborate bell tower designate it as an architecturally unique rural school.

14. Brown's Park School: Moffat County, CO by Andrew Gulliford (color)
Dan Vogeler teaches 1st through 6th grade at one of the last operative one-room schools in the state. Located north of Sunbeam, the school is made of two separate one-room buildings that were hauled in and joined together.

15. Tructon School: El Paso County, CO by Andrew Gulliford (color)
This Waterbury Jacketed Stove was the finest available when the four-room Tructon High School was finished in 1917. The school served as a hospital during the flu epidemic of 1918. It is now owned and maintained by a church.

16. Stove Prairie School: Larimer County, CO by Randall Teeuwen (color)
Children leave the Stove Prairie School 25 miles west of Fort Collins like they have done every school day since 1896.

17. White Rock School: Rio Blanco County, CO by Randall Teeuwen
This log school on Strawberry Creek northwest of Meeker is still used as a community center. The rancher photographed inside the school attended class here. The woodstove and chairs have been in the building for at least fifty years.

18. White Rock School: Rio Blanco County, CO by Randall Teeuwen

19. White Rock School: Rio Blanco County, CO by Randall Teeuwen

20. Big Springs School: Douglas County, KS by Randall Teeuwen
The original stone school at Big Springs was replaced in 1869 by a large frame building provided by the United Brethren Church. This is the third District No. 72 Big Springs School--and the last.

21. Barber School: Douglas County, KS by Randall Teeuwen
Like many eastern Kansas country schools, the Barber School No. 82 was quarried from native limestone. An agreement dated October 23, 1871 specifies the dimensions as 24 by 36 feet with a 12 foot ceiling. Total cost $600.

22. District No. 32: Stanton County, NE by Andrew Gulliford (color)
Built in 1925, this green stucco school in the rolling hills north of Schuyler is still in use as are over 300 country schools in Nebraska.

23. Little Salt Creek School: Lancaster County, NE by Andrew Gulliford (color)
This one-room white school is still in use and located only two miles east of the downtown Lincoln exit off Interstate 80.

24. unidentified school: Dixon County, NE by Andrew Gulliford (color)
Situated in the woods only a stone's throw from a Nebraska state park and the Missouri River, this school appears to be in use northwest of Ponca.

25. Sioux Creek School: Loup County, NE by Randall Teeuwen
The all brick District No. 4 school was built with large windows to the north and south, and it is as solid as the day it was completed ten miles west of Burwell.

26. Riverside District No.1: Garfield County, NE by Randall Teeuwen
Finished in 1924, the Riverside School had windows to the west and south and a handsome bell tower. Built only four miles east of the Sioux Creek School, both districts lost to consolidation.

27. Allen Duncan and the Fairview School: Buffalo County, NE
by Randall Teeuwen
Twelve miles north and four miles east of Kearney, District No. 110 was built in the 1880's. Allen Duncan says, "That's the only building I went to school in. I didn't pass ancient history so I had to repeat eighth grade. I had a real good country education. We raised by six boys and a girl, but my education through the eighth grade was as good as my kids through high school!"

28. Golconda School: Humboldt County, NV by Andrew Gulliford (color)
Originally a booming mining camp, few people now live in Golconda which is eighteen miles east of Winnemucca. The school is fascinating because the plans apparently called for three one-room classrooms united by a bell tower.

29. Leonard Creek Ranch School: Humboldt County, NV by Andrew Gulliford
Most Nevada ranches had their own schools 100 years ago. Today the Montero family still has their own tiny one-room school in a building constructed in 1918. The school is 90 miles northwest of Winnemucca where the ranch lies on the edge of the Black Rock Desert.

30. Ruby Valley School: Elko County, NV by Andrew Gulliford
This is the original Ruby Valley School built when the first Mormons came into the valley. Today a modern two-room brick school built in 1964 serves their great, great grandchildren.

31. Old Jiggs School: Elko County, NV by Andrew Gulliford
The ornate gate is to keep cattle out and children in. The school is now a post office with this sign above the mailboxes: "If you leave a message Fre'll get you stamps, but take your packages to the bar."

32. Jiggs School: Elko County, NV by Andrew Gulliford
Fourteen students grades 1st through 7th learn in this small trailer. Aline Mooney is in her fourth year of teaching, and she insists that rural school teachers must be organized and able to do a dozen things simoultaneously.

33. Broken Bone School: Benson County, ND by Andrew Gulliford (color)
Built in 1906, the two story Broken Bone School at Pleasant Lake, North Dakota was designed with one upstairs and one downstairs classroom.

34. Meyer School: Pierce County, ND by Andrew Gulliford (color)
Like many country schools, the Meyer School now serves as a voting place and as the Meyer Township Hall. It is between Pleasant Lake and Rugby.

35. Grand Harbor School: Ramsey County, ND by Andrew Gulliford (color)
This school, District No. 6, Bay No. 1, closed in 1960 and the books are still on the shelves. The number of people who voted in each election since 1960 can be found on the blackboards.

36. Nora Mohberg and the Center School: Richland County, ND by Andrew Gulliford (color)
Mrs. Mohberg taught for years in rural schools and testifies that adult immigrants often attended rural schools to learn English and the American monetary system.

37. Amidon School: Slope County, ND by Randall Teeuwen
This school is still in use. Note the teacher's living quarters in the trailer and the adjacent one-room school that is now the library.

38. Roller School: Fall River County, SD by Andrew Gulliford
Located north of Ardmore, this one-room school was named after the nearest family--the Roler's. Windows only face the east to avoid cross lighting, and the flagpole permanently leans east because of prevailing northwest winds.

39. Roller School interior: Fall River County, SD by Andrew Gulliford

40. Roller School playround: Fall River County, SD by Andrew Gulliford

41. Molan School: Hutchinson County, SD by Andrew Gulliford (color)
Built during the last period of country school construction in the 1930's, this school south of Freeman boasts a full basement, hardwood floors, windows that only face north for even light, and outhouses built to WPA standards.

42. unidentified school: Roberts County, SD by Andrew Gulliford (color)
Located north of Sisseton on highway #81, this one-room, white, rural school typifies thousands of country schools that once dotted the mountain and plains states.

43. Thistle School: Utah County, UT by Andrew Gulliford (color)
This solid sandstone school was built from a plan book and intended to be used for generations in those days before the invention of school buses.

44. Esther Cambell, Vernal: Uintah County, UT by Andrew Gulliford (color)
"Miss Esther" as her pupils called her, taught for years in Colorado rural schools like Elk Springs, Skull Creek, Brown's Park, Twin Wash, Greystone, Mantle, Ladore, and Loyd School.

45. Slater School: Platte County, WY by Randall Teeuwen
Renovated by the Slater Women's Club, this school met all the requirements to be a Wyoming Standard School, and had only sixteen teachers between 1918-1944. The furnishings are completely authentic.

46. Slater School interior: Platte County, WY by Randall Teeuwen

47. Slater School interior: Platte County, WY by Randall Teeuwen

48. Fairview School pump: Platte County, WY by Andrew Gulliford
The Fairview School north of Wheatland is still in use as a Sunday school, and the pump remains not far from the front door.

49. Axford School: Platte County, WY by Andrew Gulliford
Originally twelve miles southwest of Wheatland, this circa 1919 school was moved around a great deal as were many of the one-room frame school buildings when farm populations shifted.

50. Keeline School: Niobrara County, WY by Andrew Gulliford
Attendance at the Keeline School ran from twenty to forty students. The Jireh rural school had to be moved in for a lunch room and recreation hall, but now Keeline, 17 miles west of Lusk, has only two remaining residents.

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photographs on display at the Colorado Heritage Center, Denver, June 13--July 13, 1981

The Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, October 1--December 18, 1981

other dates are available/contact:

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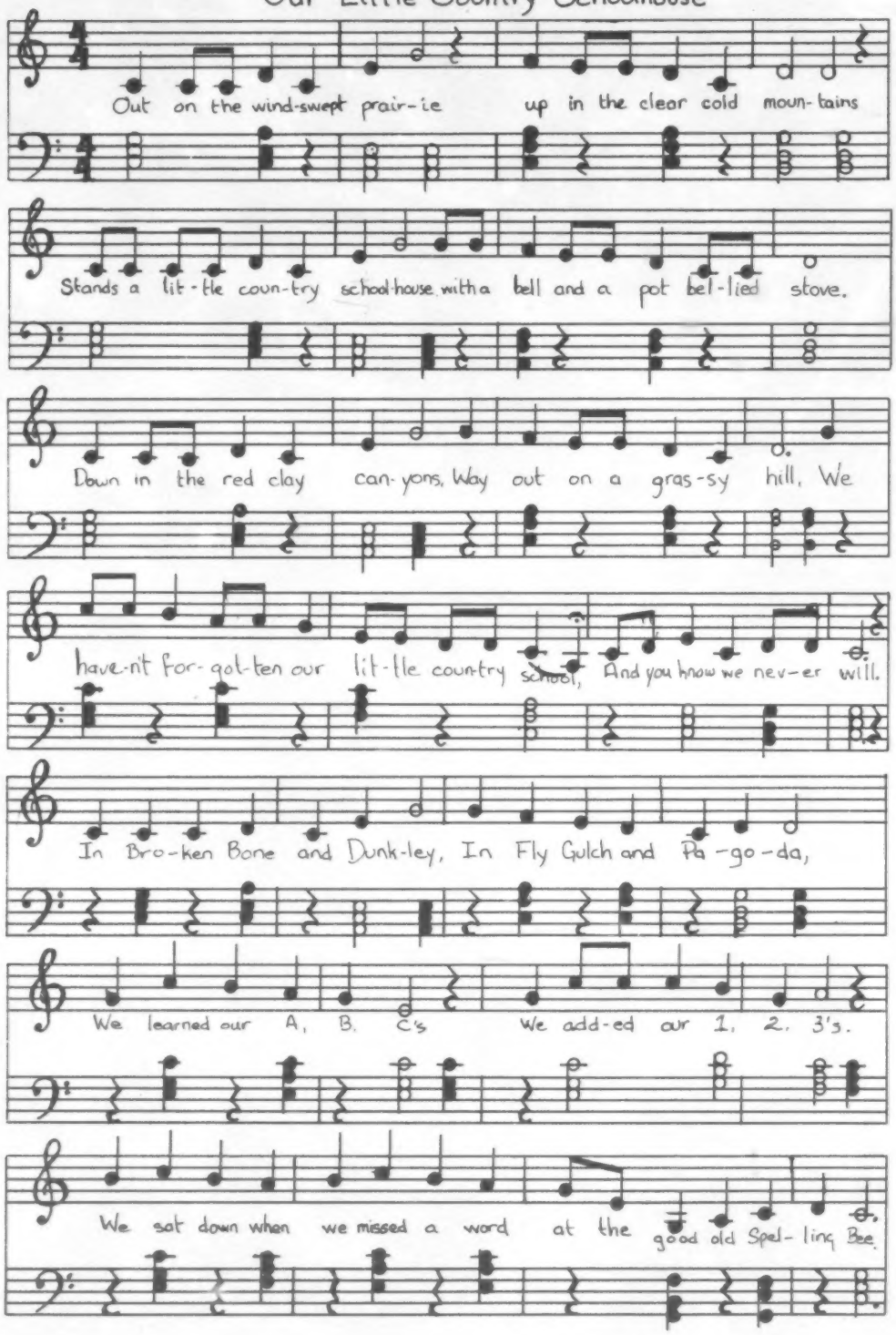
Our Little Country Schoolhouse

Out on the wind-swept prair-ie up in the clear cold moun-tains
Stands a lit-tle coun-try schoolhouse with a bell and a pot bel-lied stove.
Down in the red clay can-yons, Way out on a gras-sy hill, We
have-nt for-got-ten our lit-tle coun-try school, And you know we nev-er will.
In Bro-ken Bone and Dunk-ley, In Fly Gulch and Pa-go-da,
We learned our A, B, C's We add-ed our 1, 2, 3's.
We sat down when we missed a word at the good old Spel-ling Bee.

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